THREE FAIRY PLAYS

By

MARGARET SACKVILLE

1. COLUMBINE IN CRICKLEBURY

2. THE FAIRY LEARNS THE MEANING OF TEARS

3. THE POET, THE PAINTER, AND THE WITCH GIRL

WILLIAMS & NORGATE, LTD.

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DEDICATED

TO

CONSUELO DE REYES

AND

THE CITIZEN HOUSE PLAYERS OF BATH

TO WHOSE DELICATE INTERPRETATION THESE PLAYS

OWE SO MUCH

My acknowledgments are due to Mr. Forbes Dawson, who constructed these plays from the published fairy-tales of the same names, is responsible for many of the stage effects and directions, and suggested the introduction of one or two minor characters.

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COLUMBINE IN CRICKLEBURY

A FANTASTIC COMEDY

CHARACTERS

COLUMBINE.

PIERROT.

PANTALOON.

HARLEQUIN.

JOEY, the Clown.

MISS PEARCE.

MISS BELMONT SMITH.

LADY CLIFDEN.

MR. WEST (the schoolmaster).

THE HON. VIVIAN HALIFAX (Lady Clifden's nephew).

PETER (a postman).

POLLY (a maid).

PERFORMERS, VILLAGERS, etc.

NOTE TO PRODUCERS

COSTUMES for the following plays can be had on application from the Citizen House, Bath, and music for *The Fairy Learns the Meaning of Tears* and *Columbine in Cricklebury* from Miss Bridget Muller at the same address.

A charge of Two Guineas will be made for public production.

PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE

A large garden in the Land of Somewhere Else. It is beautifully kept with neat, carefully laid-out gravel paths, full of flowers, fruit and vegetables of curious shapes and sizes—pantomime vegetation, in fact, grown here under JOEY'S *supervision for the yearly pantomime. In a large field at the back lives a pantomime dragon, but this is summer and a holiday, so he is divided into two —his head grazing happily at one end, his hind-legs and long tail curled up asleep at the other.* JOEY, *the clown, is watering the giant flowers from a minute watering-pot, counting the drops with great accuracy.*

JOEY. I must be careful. Blimy! let me see,
No more than six small drops for *this* 'ere tree!

[*He carefully counts three drops on to a giant pumpkin.*

And for this wurzle nine—it's doctor's orders—
But rather more for them herbaceous borders.

[*He pours more vigorously.*

Dear, dear, dear, *dear*, I've made an awful splash
Over the blessed water-melons . . . Crash!

[HARLEQUIN, PIERROT, *and* PANTALOON *leap suddenly out from different corners of the stage and stand sobbing in front of him.* JOEY *drops his watering-pot.*
[*He stands open-mouthed, gazing at them.*

But, bless my buttons, what's the matter NOW?

PAN., HARL., PIER. (*together*). She's off—she's bolted!

JOEY. Not *another* row!

HARL. For *good*—I tell you.

PIER. (*agonised*). Columbine has *gone*!

JOEY. Well, now what *have* you been and gone and done!

HARL. It's all *your* fault, Joe.

PIER. Yes, *yes*, YES, YES, *YES*!

HARL. She couldn't stand your rotten jokes or guess
Your riddles—

PIER. *Any* longer.

JOEY (*indignantly*). Well, if this
Ain't rank injustice! Idiots, vipers, geese!
Excuse my language, gents, but—well, I'm blowed!—
Where has she gone to, then, the spiteful toad?

PANT. She's scooted off, and none of us knows *where*,
But out of this. Most likely Over There.

[*He points vaguely with his finger in no particular direction.*

JOEY. I sez, sez I, when Columbine gets cross,
Much as I loves the gel, she ain't much loss!
She'll come again, my boys, just give her time.

PIER. Look here, I'm too upset to talk in rhyme!

PANT. Well then, we'll change to prose—we might do worse.

HARL. Oh! no, that's *much* too dull—let's try Free Verse.

PANT. Harlequin, young, magnificent and bold,
You talk it if you like—I'm much too old!

PIER. (*very angry and rapid*). I won't talk, I won't talk at all. Nothing. Prose, Free Verse or rhyme, I won't. You fellows can gabble as much as you like. Your hearts are in your mouths. *Mine* is broken. It's often been

broken before, but never like this—and none of you care a bit!

[*He collapses on the ground, puts his arms round a huge pumpkin and sobs violently.*

HARL. Pierrot,
You are really very silly and hysterical.
(I regret to speak so harshly, but you invite reproof.—
It is always better to say what one thinks,
Provided it is sufficiently unpleasant,
Especially in Free Verse.)
The great thing is to keep our heads.—
You will destroy that very excellent pumpkin with your tears,
Then it will rot,
And become rotten,
And remain rotten,—
And not be of any use to anyone at all.
You, Pierrot, are an awful rotter,
And I really do not wonder that Columbine has left you.—
Dear me, how easy
It is to talk Free Verse—for the future
I shall never talk anything else.

PANT. (*admiringly*). Why, what a lad it is! How do you do it?

JOEY (*gloomily*). If he goes on like this, you bet he'll rue it.

PANT. Come, come, don't squabble, but with joint endeavour
Let's seek our Columbine who's gone for ever.

PIER. (*still hugging the pumpkin and hiding his face in it, whilst large tears trickle down its sides*). Oh! how unhappy I am! How very perfectly and entirely miserable! I haven't meant a thing I've said during the last ten days, so how could Columbine believe it? She might have known me better than *that*! Oh! Oh! Oh!—and now she won't ever come back—ever, never again!

HARL. Why
On earth did she do it—but *why*
Did she do it ?
It's curious and psychologically interesting,
But peculiar. Are we not
Charming, very unusual and capable people ?
She said she wanted to explore Sussex.
Why *Sussex* ?
What *does* she know about Sussex ?
Or *care* about Sussex ?
I am sure she will not find in the whole of Sussex
People charming, unusual and capable as we.
So why should she go ?—
I do not understand it at all.

[*There is a long pause—they stand hanging their heads.*

PANT. (*suddenly with great energy*). Come, lads, be brave, I'll tell you what we'll do,
We'll go and ask her pardon.
PIER. Boo, hoo, hoo !
JOEY. I'm sure that's very handsome—there's no doubt
Pierrot would put an angel's temper out.
Let's start at once, me bhoys, and I must say
I think *I* too deserves a holiday . . .
Drat this 'ere gardening business, 'ere I goes
Toiling, morn, noon and night on my ten toes,
And not a chap of you sez " thank ye."
HARL. Stop !
If you start grumbling I shall really drop ;
My nerves are frayed, my temperature is raddled,
Broke is my heart (and purse), my brain's quite addled,
My hair uncurled, my features wrinkled—Curse !—
I've dropped again in the old trick of verse !
PIER. Well, I shall run until I split my shoes—
Nothing like exercise to cure the Blues !

PANT. That's right, old son, run quickly and we'll follow—

HARL. By motor-car much quicker than the swallow—
Quicker than wireless.

PANT. Joey here shall drive.

PIER. Good luck then, if we ever meet alive!
Ta-ta—I'm off.

JOEY. Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!

HARL. Run, Joey, run and fetch the motor-car!

JOEY. Right-oh! It's waiting tight and bright and ready.
I'll drive like blazes——

PANT. (*a little tremulously*). Steady, Joey, steady!

[JOEY *and* PIERROT *rush with leaps and bounds off the stage in opposite directions.* HARLEQUIN *strikes an attitude.* PANTALOON *blows his nose loudly and dances heavily.*

[*Fantastic music.*

ACT I

ACT I

SCENE I

A low-lying old house, with a balcony overhanging the lower window, a yew tree in front with undulating Kentish country beyond. A white-painted gate leads into the garden.

[*Light music as the curtain rises.*

[*A little old, bright country postman in old-fashioned uniform and postbag round his shoulders, a bundle of letters in his hand, enters briskly through the white gate and knocks at the door.*

[POLLY, *the maid, appears at the door.*

POLLY. Any news this morning, Peter?

PETER. What a one you are fer noos, to be sure. No, there ain't an' never will be in these 'ere parts, which is all for the best. 'Oo wants noos? An' not many letters neither. Leastways, 'ere's one of these *'ere* White Sail Summer cat-er-logs—though wot Miss Pearce wants wi' sails beats me. She ain't goin' yot racin', be she?

POLLY (*very superior*). It's not that sort of a sail—it's an s-a-l-e. I can't think 'ow you comes to be so hignorant, Peter. I was born in Clapham, thank goodness, an' knows what's what.

PETER. Well—well—well, it's better than knowin' a long side too much, that it is.

POLLY. If nothing don't happen soon in this God-forsaken 'Ole-in-a-corner, I shall give notice. I can't stick it much longer.

PETER. You've said that now for the last twenty years, Polly, my dear, yet you haven't budged. I expect ye've taken root, like one of them there oak trees.

POLLY (*defiantly*). Well, I shall break away some day, see if I don't.

PETER. I dunno, I'm sure, what young gels are comin' to nowadays. Not that you're exactly a young gel, Polly, but I 'spect staying in the same spot makes you forget the passin' years.

POLLY (*furious*). I'm a good deal younger at my age than you ever was in the whole of your life, Peter Nathaniel Jones. You was born with a bent back and a white beard like a small Mefuseler.

PETER (*soothingly*). Now, now, now—don't you get huffy—come now. I dessay you was pretty enough once. Mebbe there's many folk in Clapham old enough to remember it.

POLLY. Oh! you——(*She almost chokes with rage.*)

PETER. An' when you gets animated I can almost see it meself. Now let's 'ave a bit o' singin' just to cheer us up.

[*Song.*

PETER. There's a postcard for the parson, there's a paper for the Squire.—

POLLY. (If nothing ever happens I shall set the house on fire.)

PETER. And yesterday her Ladyship received a telegram.—

POLLY. (To show you silly people what a clever girl I am—

What a clever, very clever, uncommon girl I am.)

PETER. We don't want silly cinemas like stuffy folk in town

As I was only sayin' last night to Mr. Brown.—

POLLY. (The Movie-House in Clapham! Oh! crikey, ain't it fine!

Why ain't I Mary Pickford?—that's much more in my line.
Yes, whirls and curls and pearls and Earls are certainly my line.)

PETER. As I was only sayin' to Mr. Brown last night,
If Poll was on the cinemas she'd give 'em all a fright;—
We don't want Dancin' 'Alls and sich—we've got our Church Bazaars.—

POLLY. (Well, you can bet you'll see me yet—the Queen of Movie Stars,
Pretty Polly Perkins of the Super-Movie Stars.)

PETER. You're not as young as once you was—
POLLY. You *very* rude old man.
PETER. Come, there's Miss Pearce a-callin', it's time you cut and ran.
POLLY (*furious*). I'll box your ears . . .
PETER. But bless my soul! Come Polly, don't you cry,
I likes to please, and sometimes tease, an' that's the worst of I—
A jolly, rolly, folly bloke, there ain't no harm in I!

[*He dances off.*

[*The maid goes into the house.*

[COLUMBINE—*her French hat all on one side, wearing a tattered long coat, and carrying a bundle—enters and stands looking round wonderingly. She advances a few paces, then stands listening.*

[MISS PEARCE—*an austere, severe, middle-aged lady, with pince-nez—enters. She is dressed in a skirt, blouse and sensible shoes.*

[MISS PEARCE *is accompanied by an absurd cat and dog—represented by two children. These try to make friends with* COLUMBINE *all through the conversation, and are being perpetually called to order by* MISS PEARCE.

MISS P. (*raises her eye-glasses and stares at* COLUMBINE). Well, where on earth do *you* come from?

COL. (*embarrassed*). Yes, I know I must be looking dreadfully dirty and untidy, but I'm not always like that.

MISS P. (*severely*). That is not an answer to my question. Do you not realise that it is extremely unusual for strange young women to enter other people's gardens at eight in the morning. I think it only fair to warn you that the constable in this district is very much on the alert.

COL. I lost my way. I am very tired. Your coffee smelt so good. I had to come in. If I have done wrong, I am sorry. But I am also dreadfully hungry. Perhaps you will give me a cup and then I will go.

MISS P. But all this does not tell me where you came from.

COL. From the Country of Somewhere Else—it is quite near really, but I cannot tell you how difficult it is to get into *yours*.

MISS P. (*suspiciously*). You have never been in a Mental Home, have you?

COL. A what?

MISS P. A home for the Mentally Defective.

COL. (*in despair*). I am so sorry I do not understand. In my country we never use long words. It is not our fault we haven't got them.

MISS P. You certainly *seem* sane enough. It is very odd. Expensively dressed, too! Well, you can't be allowed to sit in the garden all day. You had better come indoors and wait until I have made further enquiries. Perhaps even—— How old are you?

COL. I don't know. We are all young in my country. Even Pantaloon, who only *looks* old.

MISS P. What a very indelicate name! And who may he—she—it be?

COL. Oh! I don't know—just Pantaloon.

MISS P. This is hopeless! Well, obviously, if you

are not mad you are foreign. I believe, on the whole, foreigners are very peculiar people. They are not like us in any respect. Even their clocks are different. "Other climes, other chimes" (as my dear father used to say so beautifully). But I am not narrow-minded. The whole world, alas! cannot be like Cricklebury. So, since you are not mad you *must* be foreign. You have come from abroad. My dear child, I do not mean to insult you, but *is* this a fact?

COL. If abroad means Somewhere Else, then I have.

MISS P. (*much relieved*). Ah! now we begin to understand each other. You have come from abroad and have lost your way in a strange country. You stand in need of assistance. Is that so?

COL. Yes, Madame.

MISS P. Have you any money?

COL. I picked up a small piece of silver on the road with a three on it, if that is what you mean.

MISS P. Then you haven't. Are you respectable?

COL. (*frightened*). I hope not—it sounds very ugly.

MISS P. Another word you do not know! It makes conversation very difficult. Still, I can give you lessons. Can you sew?

COL. That is much easier! Yes, I always look after their buttons.

MISS P. Their buttons? Whose buttons? Never mind, we can discuss that another time. That is something definite, anyhow. It *might* be possible. Perhaps——The fact is, Polly is growing old and wants help. What is your name?

COL. Columbine.

MISS P. Columbine? What an absurd name! But we can easily alter that. (*Firmly*) I shall call you Martha.

COL. But I don't want to be called Martha. I don't like it at all.

MISS P. What you like has nothing to do with it. Besides, your protests are too late. It is already done. Well, Martha, I have decided to engage you as my companion. No wonder you look surprised. Not every girl has such luck.

COL. (*frightened*). You are very kind, Madame, but I do not think I want to be a companion—at least, not just yet. I should like to see one or two other places first. Perhaps you will give me a cup of coffee—then I shall go.

MISS P. Unfortunate girl! Where can you go without money?

COL. Money!—You mean that silver thing I picked up on the road?

MISS P. Yes, the silver thing. Unless you have lots of them, you can't go anywhere.

COL. What a fantastic country! (*Gloomily*) Well, I suppose I must.

MISS P. Yes—and I should like to point out that not everyone would make such an offer to a stranger.

COL. Well, then—I will stay with you until I find enough silver things to go elsewhere.

MISS P. Ah! yes—about your salary. I am a gentlewoman in reduced circumstances, and cannot offer you more than—shall we say, four pounds a year?

COL. I do not know what that is, but I should hate to reduce anyone, so, pray, offer me nothing.

MISS P. (*relieved*). I can see, at any rate, that you are a lady. Not to be grasping is a sign of true breeding. Well, Martha, you shall have the comfort of my roof and the benefit of my society for as long as you continue to deserve them. In return, I shall expect you to wash the china and help me with my Charitable Works. These are principally red flannel. Do they wear red flannel in your country?

COL. In my country we are very gay. We live mostly on asparagus and sweet champagne, and nobody does any work at all, except Joey, who pretends to look

after the garden. The climate is delicious, and we can always wear the thinnest summer clothes. Red flannel, as you see, would be somewhat out of place, (*politely*) but I daresay it has its charms.

Miss P. (*interested in spite of herself, though scandalised*). Dear, dear, dear! What a very unedifying life! No work! I can hardly bear to think of it. Still, I have been so long cut off from the gay world—these things *may* be done by the best people. One never knows. But champagne and asparagus!—how unwholesome! how demoralising! You should thank Providence, my dear Martha, that you now find yourself in surroundings where only the plainest food is thought in good taste. Your digestion and your character will thus probably be saved together. It is true I *do* allow a little cornflour on Sundays.

Col. Cornflour is a very beautiful name. I am sure I shall like it.

Miss P. Only Polly will always make it too thick. . . . Now about your clothes. There will have to be a change *there*.

Col. (*surprised*). Do you not consider my clothes sufficiently elegant?

Miss P. (*stiffly*). On the contrary. They are too much so. No really nice woman would consent to wear them. A skirt and blouse, Martha, on the pattern of this one, with sensible shoes, will be your future costume. Plain but becoming. Linen for summer—merino in winter. What could be more suitable?

Col. (*sadly, but resigned*). Very well, Madame, if it must be so, (*more cheerfully*) after all, plainness *can* be made to look chic.

Miss P. Chic! My dear Martha, you must be careful not to use such words. It is never done in our little village circle, and might arouse suspicion. I do not want any disturbing new ideas to be put into Polly's head. She is quite silly enough as it is. Now we will go in and have our coffee.

[*Duet*—Miss Pearce *and* Columbine.

Col. Oh ! where am I ?—
I hardly know
Whether I stand on
Head or toe . . .
My hat's awry,
My hair askew,
But kind Miss Pearce
Will see me through.

Miss P. Yes, kind Miss Pearce
Will see you through.

Col. It really is
The queerest thing,
I don't know whether
To sob or sing.

Miss P. *If* she's a lady,
She *may* do,
And kind Miss Pearce
Will see her through.

Col. Yes, kind Miss Pearce
Will see me through.

Together Kind Miss Pearce
She's found a maid
(Rather an odd one,
I'm afraid).
But if she's bright
And not too—too—
Then kind Miss Pearce
Will see her through,
Will see me through,
Will see her through.

[*They go into the house.*

Scene II

The sitting-room in Miss Pearce's *cottage. It is crowded with cheap furniture and bazaar ornaments. Prints of Dignity and Impudence, Wellington and Blücher at the Battle of Waterloo, Balthazar's Feast and Queen Victoria hang one on each wall. An alabaster vase in one corner contains a large bunch of pampas grass and artificial flowers tied with pink ribbon. At a table covered with a tartan cloth sits* Columbine, *her head bowed over a pile of red flannel garments. She is an elegant but exact imitation of* Miss Pearce, *her hair smoothly and severely parted on both sides of her head. She stitches industriously without looking up.*

Subdued and slightly melancholy music.

[Miss Belmont Smith *comes in. She is dressed in uncompromising country clothes —boots with extra thick soles, goloshes, etc. A small straw hat with an up-standing quill somehow balances with the help of two hat-pins on the top of her head. She carries an umbrella, a string bag and an ulster over her arm. She glances at* Columbine *with undisguised curiosity and astonishment.* Columbine *continues sewing.* Miss B. S. *sits down heavily.*

Miss B. S. (*suddenly and sharply and decisively*). Is Miss Pearce in ?

Col. (*with great politeness*). I think, Madame, she is at this moment destroying caterpillars in the garden.

Miss B. S. H'm—h'm! (*A short pause.*) By the way, I do not think we have met before. Are you—um—ha—a *relation* of Miss Pearce's ?

Col. (*demurely*). A relation—oh ! Madame, I should never presume—— Oh, no, I am her companion-maid.

Miss B. S. Dear me, dear me—a companion-maid ! Why, I should hardly have thought she could afford——

(*She pulls herself up sharply.*) However, it's no business of mine. How long have you been here?

Col. (*rising*). I am sure Miss Pearce will enjoy telling you herself, Madame. I will fetch her.

[*She goes out.* Miss B. S. *grunts audibly and fidgets impatiently.* Miss Pearce *comes in from the garden, shears in one hand, a spray in the other.*

Miss P. Good morning, Jemima—what a lovely day. Well, it's an ill wind that blows no good, I am sure.

Miss B. S. (*stiffly*). Much too fine to last, Amelia—much too fine. You see, I am well prepared for rain. I do not quite catch your meaning with regard to the ill wind?

Miss P. (*cheerfully*). The caterpillars, you see—you will blow good to the caterpillars since you have interrupted me in the act of destroying them. (*Hastily*) Not that I mean you are an ill wind, Jemima, not in the least—the very opposite. Dear, dear, I do get so mixed sometimes in what I am saying. Only the other day I said to dear Lady Clifden, "Dear Lady Clifden," I said—— But you're not going, Jemima? There are many grave questions I wish to discuss with you.

Miss B. S. (*who has been fidgeting impatiently, re-seats herself heavily—she assumes an air and voice of great responsibility*). So have I. There is the question of the village idiot. I am strongly in favour of having him removed to a home, but his parents object.

Miss P. (*who instinctively contradicts whatever* Miss B. S. *says*). Home influence, Jemima, home influence—even when it is a question of the mentally afflicted. If you ask my opinion, I am strongly in favour of letting him remain where he is.

Miss B. S. But he put out his tongue at me the other day.

MISS P. (*off her guard*). Well, Jemima, there was not much to be wondered at in *that*!

MISS B. S. (*sharply*). In what respect, Amelia?

MISS P. I mean, of course, considering the state of his intellect.

[*A long silence.* MISS B. S., *very suddenly, like an alarum clock.*

MISS B. S. Who is the young woman?

MISS P. (*startled*). *What* young woman?

MISS B. S. (*impatiently*). The young woman who was sewing in this room not a moment ago!

MISS P. Oh! *that?* That is Martha, my maid-companion. Such a nice, quiet, respectable girl.

MISS B. S. (*suspiciously*). And where did you pick her up?

MISS P. (*a little nervously*). Well, curiously enough, "pick up" in this case is the right expression. I *did* pick her up.

MISS B. S. I should have thought with your income you could hardly—— Still, that is no affair of mine. How do you mean, *pick her up*?

MISS P. (*with dignity*). She is far too much of a lady to accept a salary—a very reassuring circumstance. mean what I say, I picked her up in the garden.

MISS B. S. In the *garden*! Are you quite yourself this morning, Amelia?

MISS P. (*becoming apologetic*). Yes—I know it *does* seem rather imprudent, but then it was such an opportunity! She seems such a *thoroughly nice* girl. Fido takes to her—I like her voice—so, there it is, I engaged her on the spot.

MISS B. S. But where does she come from?

MISS P. (*feebly*). I think it must be from somewhere abroad.

MISS B. S. (*horrified*). And you mean to tell me you engaged this—this *foreigner* without a character?

MISS P. (*more and more apologetic*). Well, yes, I

admit it—it certainly *sounds* rash ; but then, as my dear father used to say, "Take risks, Amelia, do not be afraid of taking risks," and as I had never done so I thought it was about time to begin.

MISS B. S. (*solemnly and with great emphasis*). You will live to regret it, Amelia—take my word for it, you will. Moreover, you do not know what sort of an influence you may have introduced into the village. The girl is probably a thief. Your cairngorms—(*she glances enviously at the brooches with which* MISS PEARCE *is lavishly adorned*)—she will certainly steal *them* and doubtless burgle us all. Fortunately, I am heavily insured. I do not want to take away her character, but from the glimpse I got of her just now I should say she was—French. That is a very terrible thought. No French person has ever appeared in our village before. In any case, I make it a rule to distrust all strangers. Now I must go.

MISS P. (*almost in tears*). Oh ! don't go, Jemima ! Your presence gives me moral support. I must say you have shaken me a good deal. I need someone. Polly is so old, and Fido has lost all his teeth. As to the cairngorms—I shall certainly sleep with them under my pillow. Still, you *may* be mistaken. Perhaps it would be better if you do not talk about it in the village. I should not like to acquire a reputation for irresponsible behaviour. Oh dear ! oh dear ! I *hope* it will turn out all right.

Duet

MISS P. Oh ! I hope I shan't regret it !—
MISS B. S. I am certain that you will.
This girl who is a foreigner is sure to rob or kill,
She'll steal our rings and handkerchiefs, put poison in our tea—
How really *could* you take her without consulting me ?
How *dared* you do so rash a thing without the leave of me ?

MISS P. She's very gentle, hardly speaks and blushes now and then,
Takes to red flannel like a duck and never looks at men.—
MISS B. S. *Red* flannel, there you are, you see—not harmless white, but *red*;
She's probably an Anarchist who'll murder you in bed.
An Ana—Bolshi—Communist who'll strangle us in bed!

MISS P. I'll ask the Vicar what he thinks.—
MISS B. S. *He* won't know; he's a *man*.
There never was such folly since first the world began.
MISS P. You *may* be wrong.—
MISS B. S. I never am.
MISS P. Oh! what am I to do!—
MISS B. S. Just don't forget that when you're killed the whole fault lies with you—
Yes, don't forget that when you're dead no one's to blame but you.

[*She catches up her bag and ulster and goes out angrily.*

MISS P. How nice it is to have a really true, reliable friend who is glad to give advice in any difficulty. But I feel somehow that Jemima is taking too gloomy a view of things. I don't think Martha will murder me—I don't really.

[LADY CLIFDEN'S *voice is heard calling in the garden,* "Miss Pearce, may I come in?" *and before* MISS P. *has time to answer,* LADY CLIFDEN *herself appears. She is a handsome, jolly, bustling person, dressed in plain, perfectly cut tweeds, with a bright impatient manner.*

MISS P. (*effusive and respectful*). Oh! dear Lady Clifden, what a surprise! what a——
LADY C. It's the bazaar, Miss Pearce—the bazaar! I'm in despair as usual. Oh! why do I ever undertake

these things! Can you help me? The entertainment is too dull for words. Is there anything new you can suggest?—a whistler, a dancer, anything? *Do* help me.

MISS P. You are indeed a martyr in the sacred cause, Lady Clifden. If I can——

LADY C. The Vicar's songs! Too awful! We've heard them fourteen times already, not counting encores—I quite agree the audience wouldn't like them changed. Still!—*couldn't* we introduce a little new blood, as it were? My nephew, Vivian Halifax, who is rather what I believe is nowadays called a "nut," has offered to do a clog-dance, but our platform won't stand it.

MISS P. (*tentatively*). I used to recite "We are Seven" as a girl, Lady Clifden. Perhaps—if you liked—I might——

LADY C. (*heartily, not listening*). Something gay—that's what we want. (*She hums a tune.*) Merry England, that sort of thing. Something to make them jig, Miss Pearce. You know what I mean.

MISS P. (*a little piqued—stiffly*). I am by no means averse to a little gaiety myself, on—birthdays, for instance. But do you not think a Charity Bazaar is rather more *serious* an event?

LADY C. I feel I shall *die* if I have to sit through the Vicar's songs for the fifteenth time.

MISS P. But is there not some comfort in reflecting that the laxity of London has not yet contaminated our little community?

LADY C. I don't know—I don't know, I'm sure! Sometimes I wish it *had*!

MISS P. Oh! surely not, Lady Clifden—surely not.

LADY C. But *can't* you suggest *anything*?

[COLUMBINE *enters softly and goes to the table for some unfinished work.*

LADY C. (*briskly, with interest*). Who is that young lady?

MISS P. (*embarrassed*). That, Lady Clifden, is my protégée, my companion sent to me provident—yes, I *hope* I may say providentially. Her name is Martha. Martha, show her Ladyship the petticoat you have just finished. Martha is a very neat sewer—are you not, Martha?

COL. (*docilely*). Yes, Miss Pearce.

LADY C. (*who can think of nothing except the bazaar*). Well, can't she help? She's *new*, anyhow. What can you do, my dear?

COL. (*demurely*). I can dance, Madame.

MISS P. (*severely*). Martha! you never told me this!

LADY C. (*rising, very jolly*). Capital—capital! Then *that's* settled! You shall dance directly after the Vicar's song. The very thing—I'm delighted. (MISS PEARCE *tries to speak.*) No, no; that's all right—there's nothing more to be said. Dear me—I must fly! Good-bye—good-bye, Miss Pearce. No, don't come to the door. Good-bye!

[*She is already in the garden and her last good-bye sounds from the road.* COLUMBINE *sits down at the table without raising her eyes.*

MISS P. (*after a pause, disapprovingly*). Martha—I must say—I am surprised. Dance! It makes me wonder if you are hiding anything else from me. You are not a dancer by *profession* by any chance?

COL. Oh! no, Miss Pearce.

MISS P. Then I daresay—there may be no great harm in it! It's settled, anyway. Lady Clifden is so masterful! She quite sweeps one off one's feet! Sometimes I am not even quite sure she hears what I am saying. I am sure my recitation—well, well! So it may be all right—but I trust you will be very correct. What will you wear?

COL. I don't know, Miss Pearce. Can *you* lend me anything?

MISS P. Let me see, yes, I think I have a gown

which is quite suitable—black taffeta with a velvet fringe which should come *well* below your ankles. It's very loose, so will not impede your movements. That will do.

COL. Thank you, Miss Pearce.

MISS P. And now, my dear, after all this frivolity, let us get back to our red flannel!

[*They seat themselves at the work-table.*

SCENE III

The garden. Moonlight. A lamp is burning in the window of COLUMBINE'S *room.*

Bright, elfish music.

Before COLUMBINE *appears there might be a dance of white moths and grasshoppers, in the garden.*

[COLUMBINE *throws the window open and remains in full view of the audience and in the moonlight.*

Song

"O! Columbine,
Light-footed dancer!" . . .
The winds they call,
And I must answer.

A scented, soft,
White rose-leaf petal,
Where shall I fold
My wings and settle?

From white moon-dawn
Till day's upspringing—
How shall I curb
My wayward winging?

"O! Columbine,
Light-footed dancer!"
Call, call me, winds,
And I must answer!

[PIERROT *is seen strumming his guitar and looking up at* COLUMBINE.

COL. (*looking down at him*). Why, it's Pierrot!!

PIER. Perhaps you're right. Who knows!

COL. Oh, Pierrot! Oh! how glad I am to see you! Oh! I should have died if you hadn't come. Only do be quiet! You'll wake Miss Pearce. Oh! wait a moment!

[*She disappears from the window.*
[*He sings.*

My heart and purse are heavy,
And I must trudge to town
With slow and dragging footsteps,
For both so weigh me down.

When heart and purse are lighter,
I'll dance the hours away;
But that will be to-morrow,
And this is still to-day.

My pence, like love, I'll squander,
And spend my heart like gold.
So shall be plagued with neither
—Good luck!—when I am old.

[COLUMBINE *by this time has run downstairs into the garden and thrown both arms round* PIERROT'S *neck.*

COL. Why, it's the same old Pierrot—the same dear, silly old Pierrot—pretending to be broken-hearted

whilst all the time—— Oh! I am glad to see you!

PIER. Ouf! what a place! What on earth are you doing? What's happened to your hair? Well, you'd better come back now, anyhow. I had to come and look for you because I've made a new song I want you to hear and because I missed you so much.

COL. And the others?

PIER. Oh! they're looking for you too.

COL. Were you all *very* upset when you couldn't find me?

PIER. (*impatiently*). What a silly question! I say, Columbine, do you *always* mean to run away when you get cross?

COL. That's a sillier. Do I *look* as though I shall ever run away again?

PIER. (*examining her critically*). Well, you certainly have rather the look of a moulting pigeon. Evidently it was not such fun as you expected.

COL. (*anxiously*). Does that mean that my nose is red?

PIER. I should think so—but it doesn't show by moonlight.

COL. (*gloomily*). Then I might as well drown myself at once. Oh! why ever did you let me run away? Miss Pearce is trying to make me good as hard as she can. She'll probably succeed and then none of you will ever speak to me again.

[*She begins to cry.*

PIER. Miss Pearce? Who's she?

COL. I sat in her garden and she saw me there and made me her companion at nothing a week. She's going to take me inside-out and make me exactly like herself, and I've no money and have lost my way. Oh! Pierrot, *do* save me!

PIER. Well, come back with me this minute.

COL. But I'm quite sure you haven't any money either, and if we wait much longer I shall have grown so good it won't be any use. Oh! what *is* to be done?

PIER. It's quite true I haven't any money. Couldn't we borrow some? Miss Pearce might lend you a few shillings if she knew how very anxious you were to leave her!

COL. If *that's* all you can suggest, I must grow like Miss Pearce as quickly as I can and have done with it. There's no other way.

PIER. (*stands suddenly on his head*). Wait a moment! I can always think better like this. Of course there are other ways. Why! you must *dance.* Why didn't you think of it before? Everyone is obliged to do whatever you like when they see you dance. You can make anything in the world of them!

COL. Dance! Why, that's what Lady Clifden wants me to do—it's an idea.

PIER. Do you mean to say that anyone here has asked you to *dance*?

COL. For a bazaar or something of that sort. Oh! Pierrot. Yes, I will dance for them—dance and no mistake!

PIER. Get into their heads and their feet——

COL. Until they don't know which is which——

PIER. We'll show them how the stars dance——

COL. And the wind amongst red roses——

PIER. And lead them——

COL. Out of the village—over the hill——

PIER. To dance——

COL. On the edge of the world. Oh! they don't know what's coming to them. No, indeed! Miss Pearce, Lady Clifden, Miss Belmont Smith, Polly, the postman, and all and all. Oh! how surprised they'll be——

PIER. To find themselves dancing on the edge of the world.

COL. The grasshoppers and the moths must join in too.

PIER. And the wind and the white roses. Columbine, white rose——

COL. Yes. Yes. Yes.

PIER. I am the Wind. Will you dance with me?

COL. Till you blow away my petals.

PIER. Let us sing them away. Oh! We'll give them the surprise of their lives. But look here, Columbine, where can I hide meanwhile? I suppose no one here wants a chauffeur? I've never exactly *driven*, but I'm sure I can make up to look as though I could.

COL. No—besides, they think motor-cars are fast. Well, good night, Pierrot darling; I'd better get back to bed.

Duet

PIER. I will bring you roses, roses red and golden,
Plucked at night by drowsy streams in fairy-lands afar;
I will bring you lilies—lilies for your wearing,
With here and there a jewel and here and there a star.

COL. I will bring you dewy, rosy apple-blossom
Shaken from the branches of a tree in May,
Gossamer at daybreak melting in the sunlight,
Berries gathered by the sea salt with scudding spray.

PIER. Love, I'll bring you light love, light as blue waves dancing,
Dreams which fly by moonlight captured as they flew;
Joy will I bring you—joy which spoils with keeping,
Songs you have forgotten, songs you never knew.

BOTH. All the gold which gathers in deep pools at sunset—
Gold of dandelions and corn, sheaves of fairy gold.
Ours—ours the song which cannot be forgotten;
Ours—ours the youth which never can grow old.

COL. And now, and now, good night.
Pier. Good night, white roses.
COL. (*faintly*). Good night—good night, Wind amongst the roses!

[*Music.*

ACT II

ACT II

SCENE I

The Stage of the Village Schoolroom.

The back cloth represents a plain wall. Two or three rows of chairs are facing the stage. There are paper-chain decorations about the place, but the scene is cold and formal. Against the back cloth is a piano set in such a way that the pianist sits half face to the audience.

The curtain rises to bright incidental music.

The chairs are empty on rise of curtain.

[*The pianist, a shock-headed young man in morning coat, enters with a piece of music in his hand. Standing below the piano, he bows to the empty stage.*

[*The audience enter by degrees.* LADY CLIFDEN, *very bright and managing, seats herself with her house-party in the front row.* MISS PEARCE *fusses ineffectively round and at last settles down beside* MISS BELMONT SMITH, *dignified in purple plush. The performance begins. The announcements are made by the village schoolmaster, a cadaverous, rather truculent young man who is always at loggerheads with* LADY CLIFDEN. *The performance which follows can be left to the imagination of the producer. The performers consist of the two* MISS FREEKS (*pale, sentimental and out of tune*), MR. BUCKS (*the grocer's assistant—song, Old* BOB

ACRES (*who is stone deaf and plays the cornet*), THE HON. VIVIAN HALIFAX (LADY CLIFDEN'S *nephew, in his clog-dance which he couldn't bother to practise*), *the* VICAR, (*in his songs "I'm a Dainty Fairy," or something of the kind, and "The March of the Men of Harlech"*). *These are received with rapturous applause. Afterwards the schoolmaster comes forward and announces* MARTHA'S *dance.*

MR. WEST. I have pleasure in informing you, ladies and gentlemen, (*in tones of intense scorn*) that the next item on our programme is a dance performed by Miss Pearce's young lady companion, Miss—er—a—*Martha* —(*applause*). I will therefore call on Miss—er—a—*Martha* to begin.

[*With a morose frown he takes his place among the audience.*

[*The pianist plays with some difficulty Grieg's "Elfintanz"—which only arrived from London the day before.*

[*A guitar is heard to accompany the piano—and* PIERROT *enters, singing to his guitar.*

[*The man who played the cornet is heard playing off, he joins* PIERROT *and the pianist.* COLUMBINE *steps on wrapped from head to foot in a long black coat of* MISS PEARCE'S.

[COLUMBINE'S *cloak drops from her shoulders.*

[COLUMBINE *looks as though she had just stepped out of a pantomime—a rose is stuck in her hair, her skirts are very short and full, in fact she is herself again.*

[*The audience gasp.*

[MISS PEARCE *gives an "Oh!" which can be heard all through the room.*

[LADY CLIFDEN *is delighted.*

[COLUMBINE *beguns to dance. It is supposed to be a magic dance, and a great deal must be made of it. Slowly the audience pass under the spell. The dance passes through their eyes and into their feet. Their eyes are fixed on* COLUMBINE, *then with clumsy shuffling movements they get up and begin to sway in their places—then to dance in imitation of* COLUMBINE *as though in a dream.*

LADY C. (*in a strained voice*). But this is enchanting —I am young again. All things are possible. I—— (*She breaks off, hops ponderously towards* COLUMBINE, then *back again to her seat*).

[*The audience are now all dancing—bobbing and swaying—the enchantment has gripped them all.*

[MISS PEARCE *seizes a paper rose from the stage, sticks it behind her ear and dances round the back of the hall.*

[*The excitement grows.*

[COLUMBINE *and* PIERROT—*he still playing his guitar—go out dancing. The pianist plays and dances at the same time. Old* BOB ACRES *follows* COLUMBINE *and* PIERROT *off the stage, blowing his cornet.* MISS PEARCE *and the* DISTRICT VISITOR *pair off, and follow—and in turn are followed by the audience all dancing.*

[*The schoolmaster comes on to the stage, dancing by himself; then, turning, he dances off after the others.*

[*The scene goes dark.*

[*Music of the dance all through the change of scene.*

[*Note to the Producer.—The last scene, Scene I, Act II, can easily be set within Scene II —which is the same as Act I, and can remain standing all through the piece, so obviating any necessity of striking and setting it again.*

Scene II

Outside Miss Pearce's *house.*

[Columbine *and* Pierrot *dance on, followed by* Miss Pearce *still dancing,* also Lady Clifden.

[*Music all through the change of scene.*

[*They stop dancing.*

Lady C. (*breathlessly*). More — more — quicker — quicker. You must teach me all your dances. I never want to stop—never again—never again!

Miss P. (*her feet entangled in her long skirt*). Oh! Columbine, dearest Columbine, tell me where I can get a frock *exactly* like yours.

Col. (*mocking*). How well you dance, all of you!

[*The organist, the postman, the Rector's brother, the greengrocer's assistant,* Vivian Halifax, *all the men in the village in fact, dance in, surround* Columbine, *and hold out their hands in supplication.*

[*She wheels wildly round and round.*

[Pierrot *stands up C., laughing and strumming his guitar.*

Vivian. I'm head over ears and——

Organist. I want to propose.

Postman. Though well on in years with a wart on my nose,
Yet I'd like——

ALL. Yes, we *all* would——
ORGANIST. It's perfectly true——
ALL. Yes, we'd like if we could to be married to you.

[*Dance.*

Yes, all of us *want* to be married to you.

COL. Whoever would guess such fun and such frolic
Would burst under stress from minds so bucolic ?—
But if I accept——
ALL. Oh, which of us—which ?
COL. He must be remarkably handsome and rich—
And witty and graceful.
POSTMAN. There's none of us sich.

VICAR'S BROTHER. Allow me to ask——
COL. For a kiss or a rose ?
V's. BRO. It's terribly hard in a crowd to propose,
But will you ?
COL. I *won't.*
ALL. Not even for *me* ?
Col. Such obstinate lovers I never did see,
You're wasting your time, for you're none of you he !

[*She dances off, followed by the crowd, all waving their arms, supplicating, gesticulating.*

[*Old* BOB ACRES *the carpenter, who is stone deaf, enters waving a flag.*

BOB. What's all this about ? Be the King come to Cricklebury ? (*He marches round the stage singing "God Save the King."*)

[*The schoolmaster enters with a patchwork quilt wound tightly round him, and a cluster of curls on his head—which* LADY CLIFDEN *dropped on the stage before she went off and which he picked up.*

[*He is hand-in-hand with* MISS BELMONT SMITH, *who has imitated* COLUMBINE'S *dress as well as she could with a white lace window-curtain draped over a wide lampshade by way of skirts, and has tartan ribbons round her wrists and ankles.*

[*They dance down stage—up again and off.*

[COLUMBINE and PIERROT *come dancing on.*

COL. Will they ever get right again?

PIER. Yes, I'm afraid they will.

[*He dances round her, strumming his guitar.*

[*As they dance, three strangers in heavy motor coats and wearing goggles enter unnoticed and stand grouped together. One points to* COLUMBINE, *and as she finishes pirouetting they come forward, surround her, and bow fantastically.*

[COLUMBINE *stops short, dazed for a moment, cries* Oh! *and dashes forward, embracing all three.*

PIER. (*carelessly*). Hallo! you turned up then?

THE THREE (*together*). We have.

COL. And are you looking for me?

THE THREE. We are.

[*They take off their motor goggles and* PANTALOON, JOEY *and* HARLEQUIN *appear.* LADY CLIFDEN *dances on, followed by* MISS PEARCE.

LADY C. (*she is still under the spell, and speaks angrily to* COLUMBINE). Who are these people, and how dare they speak to you? I shall allow no one to address you until you are safely married to my nephew; you are much too precious.

[*She frowns threateningly.*

THE THREE (*together—very politely*). But we, Madame, are her nearest relations. You must forgive us therefore. We have some claim.

[*They throw off their cloaks.*

PANT. (*tremulously shaking his finger at* COLUMBINE—*he speaks with a slight French accent*). You bad child! What a fright you have given us, to be sure. But it does not matter. You are found. We pardon you.

[*He embraces her.*

COL. Oh! take me back.

PANT. Ah! yes. I thought you would not be happy without the old ones for very long.

MISS P. (*also still hallucinated, bustles towards them*). If you are relations of Columbine's, permit me, oh! permit me to shake you by the hand. Mine was the honour of introducing her to our little village—my roof sheltered her. Oh, let us take a little tea together, and then dance again.

PANT. (*aside to* COLUMBINE). What a very charming and unusual person your benefactress is.

COL. Oh yes, and so playful!

PANT. I like her looks. Perhaps when I get to know her better, I may, yes—I think I certainly shall, ask her to marry me. I find myself growing old. This life of perpetual excitement is too much for me. Slippers, a warm fireside, a woman with sensible shoes. Ah! yes, Paradise! (*He sighs softly.*)

[*Lively music.*

PANT. I've never seen, no, never since first my life began—

MISS P. (Such a dashing, such a handsome, such a perfect gentleman!)

PANT. A lady so unusual.

MISS P. (I *wonder* what he means!)

PANT. I'd like to live and die with her ! . . .
COL. (*aside*). (Oh, *won't* she give him beans !)
LADY C. (*she and the others are gradually coming to themselves. They stand about in dazed attitudes, rather shamefacedly adjusting their hair and garments*). I feel as though I'd been asleep, I'm only half awake !
(*To the schoolmaster*) Do take those pincurls off at once, at ONCE, for mercy's sake.

[*All pointing to each other.*

But look at him ! And look at you ! And look at me ! I think
You've had, I've had, the Vicar's had too much (strong tea) to drink !

COL. You've all been very sweet to me
PIER. Hip ! Hip ! Hip ! Hip ! Hurray !
COL. I'll come again and call on you next time I pass this way—
But now good-bye, for I must fly.
V's. BRO. (*pompously*). Ah ! cruel maid, adieu——
ALL. To leave us all—I wonder why—so much in love with you,
With lonely, bitter, broken hearts—a horrid thing to do.

[*General chorus, in which* PANTALOON *joins through sympathy.*

Boo-hoo ! Boo-hoo ! Boo-hoo !

[*With a loud whoop they leap into the car and drive away,* PANTALOON *gazing regretfully in the direction of* MISS PEARCE. *The crowd rub their eyes and disperse in a dazed and uncertain manner.*

CURTAIN.

THE FAIRY LEARNS THE MEANING OF TEARS

CAST

ELVA.

THE WOOD-CUTTER.

THE PRINCE.

THE TRAVELLER.

MARKET-PEOPLE, FAIRIES, ETC.

Scene I

THE MORASS

Very early morning.

Cotton-grass, bog-myrtle, and green rushes grow in a large clump over a morass.

Soft, soft, soft as the feathers on the bee,
Light as dew and gossamer and foam go we—
Here's the sun come back again, moon and stars are set;
If the moon would linger, we'd be dancing yet.
Fairies of the moony night, time it is to creep
Into beds of cotton-grass. Sing yourselves to sleep.

Sing a song of cotton-grass, foxglove bells a-chime,
Dainty dandelion clocks ringing out the time,
Bats and rats and owls and cats, all the furry throng,
Dancing, leaping, flying friends, put them in a song.
Fairies of the moony night—day will soon be done,
Until moonrise shut tight your eyes and quite forget the sun!

[*Fairies enter from all entrances, dancing wildly.*

[Elva *enters, and breaks into a dance, the others revolving round her. She looks off, smiles, then retires again as—*

[*The* Traveller *enters.*

[*He stands holding out his hands towards* Elva *with a supplicating gesture.*

TRAVELLER. Come to me. Come to me, I say. Let me come nearer to you.

ELVA. No, no, no, no. You cannot come any nearer.

TRAV. Why cannot I come nearer? Why will you not come to me?

ELVA. Why should I come to you?

TRAV. Because I want you. Because I want nothing but you. The hot summer night drove me mad. I followed the moonlight through the streets. I followed the moonlight right through the town and into the country. Then the moonlight gradually took shape and became you.

ELVA. I know.

TRAV. I want you. Come to me.

ELVA. No.

TRAV. Why—*why*—WHY?

ELVA. You are human.

TRAV. I cannot help that.

ELVA. I know nothing about humans. What is the use of them? When they tread on a flower, it dies. You bring with you a smell of smoke and soot. Why should I come to you?

TRAV. Why, then, did you lead me here?

ELVA. That was only in play.

[*The* TRAVELLER *stands silent with arms outstretched, tears running down his cheeks.*

ELVA. Oh! what is that on your face that glistens in the moonlight?

[*The* TRAVELLER *does not answer, but advances towards* ELVA. ELVA *runs away, hides behind a bush, and peers at him through the foliage. He disappears from sight into the morass.*

[ELVA *returns quickly. The other fairies enter quietly and look at her. She stands watching the spot where the* TRAVELLER *has disappeared. She does not notice them.*

FAIRIES. What—what was that?

ELVA. A human.

FAIRY. Why did he disappear so quickly?

ELVA. He was too heavy—the marsh swallowed him up.

FAIRY. How heavy humans must be! I wonder the earth can bear them at all.

ANOTHER. Why did he come here?

ELVA. He was following me. All humans do when they see me—the kind they call men, at any rate. It has often happened before.

FAIRY. What becomes of them when the marsh swallows them up?

ELVA (*impatiently*). How should I know?

FAIRY. You know more about them than we do.

ELVA. All fairies cannot see them. I have a special gift of second-sight, and they appear to me more often than to you.

FAIRY. Well, let us have one more dance before the sun rises.

ELVA. I have danced enough.

FAIRY. Why are you not laughing?

ELVA. I am thinking about humans.

FAIRY. Oh! they are not worth thinking of. Dance! Dance!

ELVA. I am tired of dancing.

A FAIRY. Tired of dancing?

ANOTHER. Tired of *dancing*?

ANOTHER. Oh! what does she say?

ELVA. I have danced over the cotton-grass every night for the last thousand years—now I want a change.

A FAIRY. What is a thousand years?

[*She dances off lightly.*

ELVA. I am going to have one too!

A FAIRY. A change—a change.

[*She laughs mockingly and follows the others.*

ELVA. I am going to see what humans are like.

A FAIRY. Why? Why? *Why?* (*She flutters off.*)

ELVA. There is a lot about them I do not understand. Their clothes, their boots, their slow way of talking. The queer way in which they screw water out of their eyes. The Traveller did that. It is very odd.

A FAIRY. That is called crying. I know that. I know more than you.

[*She turns a somersault and joins the dancers.*

ANOTHER. And the drops they squeeze out of their eyes are tears.

[*She and several others skip off, singing "Tears —tears—tears" in a gay chorus. Nearly all the fairies have gone now.*

ELVA. Tears! How pretty it sounds! Crying! I should like to be able to do that. I must find out. I wonder if the traveller could have shown me. What do they mean, I wonder?

OTHER FAIRIES (*mocking*). Tears—tears, Elva! Be sure you bring them back with you. Bring us a tear to drink. Tears may be sweet—who knows! Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye.

[*They all go off laughing.*

ELVA. You foolish things! You are good for nothing except dancing. Well, you will not miss me much. At last I shall use my wings for some purpose. Who knows, I may become a human myself for a short time—for a few hundred years or so.

Song

Shining moon and cotton-grass
Fairies of the green morass,
Dance all night and dream all day,
Frisk and flutter: I'm away!
Broken is the moony spell;
Fairies of the marsh, farewell!—
Frisking fairies, fare you well!

There's another world quite near
Full of creatures strange and queer ;
Shops and roofs and chimney-stacks,
Odd folk dressed in browns and blacks,
Clumsy, heavy-footed things,
With heads, arms, noses, but no wings—
They move like beetles without wings.

There's a world both weird and strange,
I shall like it for a change.
I shall wander where I will,
Perch on roof and window-sill,
Learn why men have such large ears,
And the secret of their tears—
Learn at last what's meant by tears.

[*She dances off.*

CHANGE OF SCENE

SCENE II

The WOOD-CUTTER'S *cottage in the depths of a great forest with a tiny garden surrounded by a green fence.*
The gate in the fence is open.
Small children dressed as rabbits enter from all sides.
They dance, then bolt off in all directions, some through the gate into the cottage.

[ELVA *enters and looks round.*
[*The* WOOD-CUTTER, *a very old man, enters smoking a large pipe. His beard is long and white and shines like silver in the moonlight ; he wears large horn spectacles. Coming through the gate he looks round. The rabbits enter and sit up, looking at him.*

WOOD-CUTTER. Well, well, you're a nimble lot, ain't you ! Perhaps you know you're welcome. No

traps, no snares, as I daresay you've found out. But don't you eat *all* my lettuces now, or I shall have to take notice.

[*The rabbits hop about contentedly as the old man, going to the porch of cottage, sits smoking his pipe. The rabbits look in his direction, washing their faces; some hop into his cottage; two or three sit in front and look up into his face.*

[*The* WOOD-CUTTER *looks round the corner of the porch, listening.*

[*The rabbits stop their gambols, scatter and hop off.*

[*The old man places his pipe down upon the seat and, rising, looks off; then, taking up his pipe again, sits quite still.*

[ELVA *enters, lies with her chin resting on the palms of her hands, her elbows on the ground, her heels kicking in the air. She is smiling up at the old man in a mischievous manner.*

W. (*rises, lays down his pipe and comes wonderingly through the gate*). Well, now I never did—never, ever! But didn't I always say there were fairies about the place? Well, now!

[ELVA *rises and turns quickly a somersault and goes out.*

W. (*staggers as though he had been struck, and, looking round, beams delightedly*). Well, well, well! But will she come back now? Fairies are will-I-won't-I things. I wonder—I wonder.

[*He smiles broadly and, turning, goes through the gate into the cottage.*

[*The rabbits re-enter from all sides and, running through the gate, peer into the cottage after him.*

[*The* WOOD-CUTTER *returns with a saucer of thick cream and places it on the floor. The rabbits make for it.*

W. (*shooing them off*). Be off with you. It's not for you. It's for the fairy. 'Tain't every night a fairy pays us a visit. Do you know what a fairy is? Your long ears must have heard fairies singing at times. Well, there's one here now. Shoo—shoo—off with you—shoo!

[*The rabbits hop away in different directions, putting their heads round the corner of the scene and watching the* WOOD-CUTTER, *who turns and shoos them again.*

[*They disappear.*

[ELVA *appears shyly.*

[*The* WOOD-CUTTER *looks at her fixedly without daring to move.*

ELVA. Aren't you surprised to see me?

W. Not a bit.

ELVA. You talk as though you saw fairies every day of your life.

W. So I do. In my head.

ELVA. In your *head*. What's the use of *that*?

W. There's nothing can be seen with the eyes what hasn't been seen in the head first.

ELVA. Well, you're the first human I've ever come near to. Do you know that?

W. (*gravely*). You are doing me a great honour. I have always been curious to see a fairy.

ELVA. Well, what do you think of me—now I *have* come?

W. Why, you're like to—like apple-blossom on a spring morning—like a cowslip bell.

ELVA. And you are like a very old oak tree covered with moss. Well, good-bye.

W. Pretty fairy—don't go.

ELVA. I must—I must.

W. Won't you have a drink of cream first?—thick cream, rich cream.

ELVA. Well, perhaps.

[*The* WOOD-CUTTER *offers her the saucer with great courtesy. She takes it in both hands and drinks, looking at him mischievously over the edge.*

W. And strawberries?

ELVA. How large they are! They have grown fat from being kept in gardens.

W. (*slyly*). Would you not like to grow tame and comfortable and stay in a garden, too?

ELVA (*furiously*). What ugly words! Tame and comfortable—*me!* How dare you think it, even!

W. I wasn't serious—pretty fairy.

ELVA. Now you have frightened me. I am going!

W. (*sadly*). Have I frightened you away?

ELVA. Yes, with your ugly words.

Song

ELVA. I'm off, and away
With the wind in my wing.—
W. Oh! stay with me, stay!
ELVA. I'm a runaway thing.—
W. As fickle as May,
Or warm weather in spring.
ELVA. Like the west wind in May
Or like sunshine in Spring.

W. If you never come back
I'll be sorry and sore.—
ELVA. Set a dream on my track
And I'll come back once more,
Shining there in the black
Little porch by the door—
In the queer little, black little
Porch by the door.

W. But if I could fly
I would come with you too!
ELVA. Oh! no, you would die
Of the damp and the dew!
You're human—that's why,
Old woodman, adieu!—
For humans can't fly,
So, woodman, adieu!

Good-bye—good-bye—good-bye!

The owls are hooting, the skies are red,
The harvest moon has a fiery head,
The beetles and big brown moths are humming,
I'm coming, I'm coming, I'm coming, I'm coming!
In headlong flight,
Through the misty night,
Looking neither to left nor right—
Good-bye, good night, it will soon be morning!
Though I'm out of sight,
I'll come back without warning,
So be sure you keep your lamp alight!

[*She disappears.*
[*The old* WOOD-CUTTER *looks disconsolately after her—then takes up his pipe and begins to smoke again.*

SCENE III

The interior of the WOOD-CUTTER'S *hut.*
The wind is heard howling and the sound of rain spattering the windows.
The WOOD-CUTTER *is sitting in front of a fire, half dozing.*
A scraping sound is heard at the door.

The WOOD-CUTTER *starts, looks round and, rising, goes to door, and opens it.*

[ELVA *is discovered crouching against the door. She wears a brown hood pulled tightly over her head, her feet are bare.*

W. I thought you would come back! Come in—come in!

[ELVA *enters demurely, and, going to the front of the fire, curls up like a cat.*

[*The* WOOD-CUTTER *closes the door and bows to her as she passes him.* ELVA *laughs gaily as she looks round the room.*

W. Aren't you cold?
ELVA. No.
W. Or wet?
ELVA. No.
W. Or hungry?
ELVA. No.
W. I forgot you were a fairy. Forgive me.
ELVA. But I should like some cream, if you please.
W. Cream, cream—that is always ready for you.

[*He hands her the bowl ceremoniously and she drinks out of it, her eyes sparkling.*

ELVA. You are an extremely nice human—are they all like you?
W. Some are even nicer. Some are young.
ELVA. Young! What is that?
W. What you will always be.
ELVA. Was the Traveller young?
W. The Traveller?

[*The wind howls so loudly they can no longer hear each other speak.*

ELVA. Sh! Sh!

W. Have I said anything wrong?

ELVA. I was not talking to you, but to the wind. He was making much too much noise.

W. (*surprised*). Do the winds obey you, then?

ELVA. Not always, but the winds are my friends. Have you ever talked to the wind?

W. No.

ELVA. That is a pity. Why do you keep your windows so tightly closed? They do not like that. They should be open always. You have never seen the winds, I suppose?

W. No; I am a little short-sighted.

ELVA. Then you do not know how beautiful they are. They wear gold circlets round their heads and have great troops of horses. The horses plunge and shake their manes. That is the noise you hear. Sometimes I spring on the back of one as he whirls past. That is grand fun! We hunt the clouds and the horses churn the seas with their feet. We leap over ships and houses and trees. Would you not like to ride like that too?

W. I'm not sure. I'm rather a rheumaticky old man. And what else do you do?

ELVA. I dance. Do you know a clearing not very far from here where cotton-grass grows? It grows so thickly that no one would guess there was a morass beneath. There I dance all night. Lots of us dance there. We change colour and move so quickly you would think you saw a rainbow over the place. Sometimes I dance alone. If a traveller passes, I love to lure him into the very middle and leave him there. I laugh behind a bush as he sinks in the black mud.

W. (*shaking his head sorrowfully*). That is a cruel game—a sad game. You should not do such things. It is wicked.

ELVA. What is that? And why should I not? I do what I choose—always. But I would not treat you

so for I love you, and as long as you give me cream I will come and see you very often.

[*She nestles up against the* WOOD-CUTTER'S *knee.*

W. I am very glad to hear it. It is a great honour for me. I have always wanted to know a fairy, and you shall have as much cream as you like. But where are all your companions? You are not the only fairy in the forest, surely?

ELVA. I am tired of them. They can only dance. That is why I have come to you. I want to know what humans are like. I have only seen them from a long way off. I was shy. Now tell me about them.

W. What shall I tell you? It is so difficult! How shall I make you understand? For you are a fairy thing without heart or soul, and you do not know right from wrong.

ELVA (*impatiently*). You use strange words. Words I do not like. But you must explain—that is why I came. First of all, about hearts. You say I have no heart. What is a heart?

W. Something that humans have. Some of them. I was wrong in saying you had none. But yours is a lighter one. Light—so light! Like thistledown. Ours are never as light as that.

ELVA. What makes them heavy?

W. Oh! a lot of things. They get overgrown like rocks with barnacles, and then at the root of each must be, I think, a deep hidden well of tears.

ELVA. Tears—tears! But that is what I want to know. That is what I want to get at. What makes tears?

W. Everything. Even laughter can make tears.

ELVA. The traveller shed tears. Why?

W. Because he loved you.

ELVA. Does love bring tears?

W. Very often.

ELVA. I love you—but I do not cry.

W. That is a different sort of love.

ELVA. Then I must love that way too. Have you known the other?

W. Yes.

ELVA. Tell me about it.

W. There's not much to tell. Long ago I followed someone as beautiful as you, but beautiful in a human way. Like you, when you mislead people, she led me into a morass. I sank and sank, but I was not like your traveller. I came out on the other side.

ELVA. And what did you find there?

W. This hut, this pipe, the axe with which I cut down trees, and a cheerful heart.

ELVA. My heart is so light I suppose there cannot possibly be any tears hidden in it!

W. You will have to live among humans if you want to find out.

ELVA. Shall I like them? Tears, I mean.

W. No; and it will be a pity if you should ever cry. You had better be a soulless thing, for ever. You are so joyful, so sweet! You cannot understand—that is just as well. No one likes tears.

ELVA (*reluctantly*). But *I* might. Besides, I wish to know—I shall never be happy till I do. How can there be anything I cannot understand?

[*She stamps her foot.*

W. (*soothingly*). There—there—there! Calm yourself, my pretty; this is no talk for a fairy. Won't you sing me a song?

ELVA (*pouting a little*). Very well, if you can only talk nonsense!

Song

On lonely heights
Which a faint moon lights
I run with the wind and dance o' nights;
Laughing, I leap
Where the grey clouds sweep
Over the face of the stars asleep.

I have no home,
I go and I come,
Wet with rain and heavy with foam,
When Autumn calls,
And the ripe fruit falls,
I bask on the hot red garden walls.

If you would know
Which way I go,
Light, light, light on my pointed toe,
You must keep watch
At noon and snatch
A ray of sun from the wild-rose patch ;

You must lay snares
Of gossamer hairs
To trip my dancing feet unawares,
And then, oh ! then,
Like the sun, like the rain,
You must just let me go again !

W. That is a very nice song. I am very glad you have come to me. But you will fly away soon again—and if you do, perhaps you will see me shed a tear.

ELVA. That will be very interesting—but I shan't go yet.

W. Not many. Tears are difficult at my age. But two or three perhaps, which you can take back with you to show to the other fairies.

ELVA. What fun ! They will be so surprised. Some of them won't even believe in humans.

W. Won't they, indeed ?

ELVA. All fairies cannot see them. Besides, we live mostly by night, when you sleep. So when a human passes, there are some who think it is only a trick of moonlight.

W. That is very strange. Humans say the same about fairies.

ELVA. Teach me to be human.

W. My dear, how shall I begin ?

ELVA. Well, try, at any rate.

W. Then, as a beginning, would you like to sweep out my cottage?

ELVA (*excited*). Yes—yes.

W. You will find a little broom in the corner.

[ELVA *takes the broom and whirls it about, dancing in all directions.*

Oh, what a dust!—what a dust you are making! But it doesn't matter, fairy dust is gold dust and will bring me luck.

[ELVA *continues dancing.*

W. But you will mess your pretty clothes. That will be such a pity. They are like butterflies' wings and like rose petals. I must buy you some print at the market and you can make yourself a little pink pinafore.

[ELVA *drops her broom and stands between his knees, gazing intently into his face.*

ELVA. The market—what's that?

W. The place where people buy and sell.

ELVA. Do lots of humans go there?

W. Yes—lots and lots!

ELVA. Oh! take me with you.

[*The* WOOD-CUTTER *looks at her a little doubtfully.*

W. Well, I don't know. I'm not sure. But you must promise to be very good and not play tricks on people.

ELVA. Oh! yes. I will be good, so good. (*She turns a somersault.*) Take me!—take me!

W. You can ride the old grey pony, and when we get there I will teach you how to buy and sell.

ELVA (*anxiously*). Perhaps I shall be able to buy some tears?

W. Tears are not for sale; they would not be very profitable things.

ELVA. At any rate, it will be my first lesson in becoming human. What fun—what fun!

Song

W. Oh! the humming, buzzing market and the busy market town—

ELVA. I shall ride there, I shall ride there in a green and purple gown! . . .
And you shall give me pennies—

W. It may be one or two—

ELVA. And a little market-basket, and you'll tell me what to do.—
I'll do *every*thing you tell me if you tell me what to do.

W. There'll be beef and beer in plenty, and lots of fun and noise. . . .

ELVA. I'll buy you bread and milk and jam—

W. And I shall buy you toys.
Ribbons for your bodice; buckles for your toes;
Cotton, tape, and pinafores and braid to tie in bows.—
A little fluffy jacket, all trimmed with yellow bows.
And there we'll see a roundabout and dancing dogs and bears,
A parrot and a crocodile—

ELVA. (Perhaps *he'll* sell me tears).
Oh! what delight—I'll dance all night—I'll dance away my shoes—

W. Then you must buy another pair—you've only got to choose.—
Another pair, a shiny pair, which only I can choose.

[WOOD-CUTTER *and* ELVA *dance in the centre of the stage. Rabbits, hedgehogs, moles, pheasants, squirrels, etc., dance round them. The* WOOD-CUTTER *and* ELVA *dance off together as the curtain falls.*

Scene IV

The market-place of an old town.

Very bright lively music. In the distance an outline of blue hills.

The stalls of the market-people are everywhere. There is much noise, bustle and good-humour.

A pretty market-girl enters with a basket on her arm. She sings.

Song

What's to buy and what's to sell?—
Cherries gathered as they fell;
Summer roses—come and buy—
(One a penny)—ere they die.
Spend your penny, pretty maid—
Spend it quickly, roses fade.—
Roses bloom but roses fade.

Milk and eggs and barley-bread,
Tender chickens, honey-fed,
Shoes for her and gloves for you,
Handkerchiefs as new as new;
Lads, if you don't purchase some,
You'll be sorry when you're home!—
Purchase quickly, then go home.

Toffee, pear and chocolate drops
(The sort you cannot buy in shops),
Frills and lace and furbelows,
Cape with streamers tied in bows.
Spend your penny at my stall—
If you've many spend them all!—
Pence are heavy, spend them all.

[*The market-men and women drop into line on each side of the singer and join in a short dance, going up stage after the dance.*

[Elva *and the* Wood-cutter *enter. She comes down the stage, looking about her curiously.*

[*The* Wood-cutter *turns and speaks to a*

friend and walks off the stage, thinking that ELVA *is beside him.*

[*The market-people turn and gaze at* ELVA. *They seem gradually falling under a spell.*

[ELVA *darts from one to the other, making friends with all. They are now completely fascinated.*

WOMAN. Eh! but she's a lovely thing!

ANOTHER. Where do you come from, pretty?

ANOTHER. She's soft like a swan's breast.

A MARKET LASS. Like curds and whey. Light—light as a feather, ain't she?

ELVA. I'm glad you think I'm nice.

A WOMAN. There's never been anything like her in these parts.

ELVA. You are nice people. I am glad I came.

An OLD MAN. She makes me want to dance, she do.

A WOMAN. Dance, and you turned eighty last birthday!

ELVA. Dance—dance, then! There's nothing easier.

[*The old man hobbles into the middle of the ring they have formed round* ELVA, *stiffly at first, then more and more briskly.*

Well, now—who ever saw the like? Old Yammie Mutckin—well, now!

[ELVA *and the old man dance round and round the circle. The market-folk to one another:—*

Where do she come from, do ye think?
Wully the old wood-cutter—she come with him.
An adopted darter, like enough.
Or a niece arrived sudden from furrin parts.
That's no niece of Wullie's. That's a Princess.
A fairy more like.
A fairy—a fairy—that's what she is!
A fairy!
Look how spry she's made old Yam.
Be you a fairy—Miss?

ELVA (*still dancing*). Perhaps—perhaps.

[*The market-people gather round her entranced. A woman throws her a bunch of roses. She stops.*

ELVA. That's enough. I didn't come here to dance. I can do that anywhere. I came to buy pins and needles. At least that's what the Wood-cutter said. But I didn't come really for that. I came to—can you guess what I came to buy?

A WOMAN. No, pretty; but if it's on my stall, help yourself.

ANOTHER. If it's sweeties—come here.

ANOTHER. Here are cowslip bells and the biggest roses ever was seen, dearie.

[*They all press round her, begging her to accept their wares.*

ELVA. No, no—I don't want flowers or sweets. Not just now, I mean. What I really want and what no one ever seems to have is the thing they call tears. Has anyone any tears to sell?

A WOMAN (*surprised*). Tears! And what can a pretty thing like you want with *tears*?

ANOTHER. We've all left our tears at home, dearie. Tears are not for the likes of you.

ELVA (*crossly*). Oh dear, how disappointing it all is!

WOMAN (*regretfully*). If it had only been yesterday now, I cried a good bucketful.

ELVA. That's no use. I shall go away.

COUNTRY PEOPLE. Oh no, Miss; we can't let you go yet.

It's not often we can see a fairy.

Stay with us—please stay, Miss!

[ELVA *begins to dance wildly, a hovering sort of dance, as though preparing to fly. The market-people make a tight circle round her,*

hoping to prevent her escape. As she dances, she becomes happy once more. The crowd moves back, and the King's son, who has come upon the stage unperceived, stands watching her entranced.

[*The* PRINCE, *watching her, suddenly places his hand upon his heart.*

[ELVA *at the same moment slows down in her dancing—starts—puts her hand in her bosom and draws out a heart.*

ELVA. Oh! what is this? What does it mean? Where does it come from? Something pricked me hard and I found this. What is it? It must be very sharp to prick like that. Is it a rose with sharp thorns? Is it alive? I am afraid of it. Oh!

[*She drops the heart on the ground.*

PRINCE (*he picks it up and very gravely hands it to her*). That is my heart—you have let it fall.

ELVA. Your heart! But I do not want your heart. It stings. I am afraid of it. If it is your heart, why do you not keep it?

PRINCE. I am sorry. I cannot take it back. It is not mine any longer.

[*He turns away. The crowd stand silent and a little frightened.*

ELVA. Then leave it where it is.

[*She stands poised ready to start her dance again.*

PRINCE. Wait. I will sing while you dance.

PRINCE'S SONG

Oh! will you gather roses,
The white ones and the red?—
Oh! will you gather roses,
Or gather hearts instead?

The roses bloom and wither,
Uncaring on their stem;
But if it's hearts you gather,
It's not so well with them.

Oh! gather hearts or roses,
To-morrow or to-day—
Both in the dust are lying,
For both are cast away!

ELVA (*petulantly*). That is not at all the sort of song I can dance to.

[*The* WOOD-CUTTER *enters—he is troubled and anxious.*

W. What are you doing? Why did you leave my side? You have broken your promise.

ELVA (*mischievously*). Why are you so cross?

W. You are not to be trusted. You have been playing tricks on all these good people.

ELVA (*indignantly*). Not at all. I have been making friends.

W. Friends! (*Sadly*) I should not have brought you —it was my fault.

[*The spell slowly lifts from the market-people, who have been dreaming. One by one they disperse, half dazed, and saying little.*

ELVA. I cannot think why you will insist that I have been doing wrong.

W. I am sorry, my dear, I may have been mistaken, but I had a presentiment of evil. In any case, it is time we were going home. (*He sees the heart.*) What is this on the ground?

PRINCE (*stepping forward. He speaks throughout in a toneless voice*). That, sir, is my heart.

W. (*surprised*). Who is this?

ELVA. This is one of my new friends.

PRINCE. I am the King's son.

[*The* WOOD-CUTTER *bows and looks at both in astonished silence.*

And wherever you go—you and your daughter, there will I go too.

W. She is not my daughter. She is a fairy. She has neither heart nor soul. King's son, do not come! Do not think of following us. She will lead you into the morass and leave you there.

ELVA. What does it matter if I do?

PRINCE. Thank you for your warning. It is, I know, well meant, but I shall come.

W. Is there nothing to be done? Nothing that will stop you?

ELVA. But why should you *wish* to stop him?

PRINCE. Nothing.

W. King's son, pick up your heart and leave us.

PRINCE. Of what use is my heart now? It is covered with dust.

W. Then I will take it and guard it carefully, for some day you will have need of it again.

PRINCE. As you will.

[*The* PRINCE *and* ELVA *walk away side by side, the* WOOD-CUTTER *follows with bowed head.*

SCENE V

The WOOD-CUTTER'S *hut—repeat of Scene II. Plaintive music.*

ELVA *enters laughing, pirouettes from the centre of the stage and subsides on a log.*

The rabbits, hedgehogs, etc., enter from all sides and welcome her.

[*The* PRINCE *enters. The rabbits scamper off in every direction.*

ELVA. Good morning. (*She continues pirouetting.*) Are you happier to-day?

[*The* PRINCE *stands and looks at her silently.*

ELVA. Oh! how grave you are—how grave you are! Was there ever anything in the world so grave! It might be winter—yet the sun is shining.

PRINCE. You, Elva, are never grave, then?

ELVA. Only in late autumn when mists blow up from the sea and my wing-feathers grow damp and clammy. But I soon fall asleep.

PRINCE. Have you wings, Elva?

ELVA. Little ones—folded away under my pinafore. They do not take up much room.

PRINCE. Ah!—I should like to see your wings.

ELVA. If I shook myself they would soon unfold again. But now I want to do without them. I am trying to become human, so I suppose they will grow smaller and smaller.

[*The* PRINCE *laughs.*

ELVA. That is the first time I have heard you laugh. You do not laugh very well.

PRINCE. I am laughing at the thought of your becoming human.

ELVA. Why should that make you laugh?

PRINCE. Because it can never happen.

ELVA. Am I not a little bit human yet?

PRINCE. You have not even begun to be.

ELVA. But how shall I know when I *do* begin?

PRINCE. You will find no difficulty in that.

ELVA. What are the signs?

PRINCE. For one thing, you will understand what I am saying.

ELVA. Do I not understand now?

PRINCE. No.

ELVA. What is it that I do not understand?

PRINCE. That I love you.

ELVA. Oh! how you always say the same thing.

PRINCE. That I love you. There is nothing else to say. Can you understand that?

ELVA. I do not want to understand.

PRINCE. Then what is the use of talking about being human?

ELVA. How you plague me sometimes with your talk!

PRINCE. Why do I love you?—who, after all, will only lead me into a morass to die?

ELVA (*earnestly*). Oh, no! I never do that now. The Wood-cutter has forbidden it. I only did that when I was very young.

PRINCE. You let my heart fall in the dust.

ELVA. Your heart? Oh! but the Wood-cutter picked it up. He dusted it and cleaned it, for he is a very tidy old man.

PRINCE. And where is it now?

ELVA. Locked away safely in a little box filled with lavender and rose-petals. The box is locked, I know. I tried to open it—but he always keeps the key.

PRINCE. Is it still alive, I wonder?

ELVA. It must be, for I can hear it beating through the wood when I hold the box to my ears—like the sound of the sea in a sea-shell.

PRINCE. Well, can you wonder that I am so grave?

ELVA. Because of your heart?

PRINCE. Yes.

ELVA. But you say I have no heart, and yet I am not grave.

PRINCE. That is quite different.

ELVA. Why?

PRINCE. I cannot explain.

ELVA (*impatiently*). You can explain nothing.

PRINCE. Except that I love you.

ELVA. Again—again! Oh! how you weary me! Can you tell me nothing except that? What is the use of a human friend who can only repeat the same thing?

PRINCE. Human beings are like that.

ELVA. Then I will not be human.

PRINCE. You should not get discouraged so quickly.

ELVA. Then why will you not help me? Why will you not show me the way? But you do not teach me anything. You cannot even tell me about tears.

PRINCE. Tears, tears. Ah! yes. I think I can tell you about tears.

ELVA. Tell me, then. Teach me, teach me how to shed tears.

PRINCE. Ah! if I could do that!

ELVA. What would happen then?

PRINCE. *I* might shed them no longer.

ELVA. Teach me, then—teach me.

PRINCE. It is not in my power.

ELVA. Oh! you are no better than the others.

Song

PRINCE. I left my father's kingdom, my heart was in my hand,
I gave it to a fairy, and beggared now I stand.
She took my heart, she took my joy, she took my songs from me,
And now my heart is laid away safe under lock and key.—
A poor and wasted heart it is, kept under lock and key.

ELVA. Take back—take back your heart, then; it is not worth a song.

PRINCE. I cannot take it back again—it's been away too long.
It's yours.

ELVA. I do not want a heart.

PRINCE. Then nothing's left to do.
Where'er you lead—my doom's decreed—I still must follow you.—
I'm lost indeed since where you lead I still must follow you!

ELVA. Oh! follow, follow, follow—my joyous wings I'll spread!

PRINCE. I cannot fly; you soar too high. I'm sick in heels and head!

ELVA. Well, then, adieu—I'm tired of you—the journey's scarce begun.

PRINCE. How can I start without a heart?

ELVA. Well, get another one.—
Easy to start without a heart or find another one.

[*She exits brightly into cottage. He follows.*

SCENE VI

A room in a ruined castle, half-roofed in, the walls green with damp.

The wind whistles and shrieks through the place.

Moonlight. The PRINCE *is discovered seated on a stone.*

Fairies enter, form a chain and dance. The PRINCE *does not see them.*

[*The* PRINCE *sings.*

PRINCE'S *Song*

How darkly dawns
The blood-red moon;
The grey bats dance
To the wind's tune.

The grey bats dance,
The wind is shrill,
Roars, shrieks and whimpers,
Then is still.

Like a grey bat
My sorrow flits
In and out
Of my poor wits.

My sorrow, risen
With the moon,
Treads a wild dance
To the wind's tune.

The winds may lead it
Where they will,
It shrieks, howls, whimpers,
Then is still.

[ELVA *appears suddenly from the shadow.*

PRINCE. You here—you!

ELVA. Why should I not be here?

PRINCE. I do not want you—I want peace. Leave me—leave me.

ELVA (*surprised*). But you always want me!

PRINCE. I want peace, I tell you. To-morrow I can begin to suffer again.

ELVA. I was frightened. I came.

PRINCE (*incredulous*). Frightened? You!

ELVA. The Wood-cutter was angry. He says that I am cruel—that I hurt you. Is it true?

PRINCE. *You* ask that?

ELVA. I do not mean to hurt you. I want to play. I want to play always. Why will you not play as I wish?

PRINCE. I love you.

ELVA. Again!

PRINCE. You do not love.

ELVA. Is that all?

PRINCE. Except to torment me.

ELVA. It is love torments you? Can I help that?

PRINCE. I do not know.

[*There is a long silence. The* PRINCE *looks away with sombre eyes.*

ELVA. Oh! this is dreadful. I am frightened still. This is like winter. I cannot bear it. Forget you love me. Come and dance. I will make you forget. We will dance all night.

PRINCE (*dully*). With you? All night?

ELVA. Yes, yes. With the winds blowing us this way and that. They will toss us to each other like balls of thistledown. Come—come!

PRINCE. All night!

ELVA. Like seagulls in a storm. We shall whirl hither and thither. You will forget you love me. Come!

PRINCE. Yes, I may find forgetfulness. There is a way.

[ELVA *whirls out. The* PRINCE *follows.*

[*The fairies enter again from all sides and dance as before. The scene darkens.*

[*Song whilst the scene changes.*

Song

The fields are wet
And grey clouds hover
Lightly over
The red sunset.
And in the meadow
Of four-leaved clover
Your dancing shadow
With mine has met.

Dance with and hold me,
Love me, enfold me.
You but a mortal,
A fairy I!—
You have passed under
A light dream's portal.
Now lost in wonder,
Dance there—and die.

The end—what of it?
This is your profit:
To dance all night
'Neath a fairy moon;
Deep in clover,
I wait my lover—
Mortal lover—
Come soon, come soon!

Scene VII

The scene shows a country—half marsh, half meadow. Gnarled fir trees and toadstools in the foreground.

[Elva *enters, more slowly followed by the* Prince. *She stops.*

Prince (*comes near to her*). Ah! how I love you! (*His voice is broken.*)

Elva. You shall dance with me all night, (*she becomes mischievous again*) then—if you do . . .

Prince. If I do?—then?

Elva. I will love you too!

Prince. Till the stars fall, then—only love me!

[*The moon now has fully risen.*

Elva. But you must not falter once.

[*Music for the dance.*

[Elva *dances wildly—she does not tire. Ever more frenzied she grows, flying hither and thither. The* Prince *follows her.*

Prince. Have mercy.

Elva. The dance has only just begun.

Prince. And will you love me afterwards?

Elva. If you dance to the end.

Prince. Then to the end—so be it!

[*They continue dancing, more and more wildly. The* Prince *drops down motionless in the centre of the stage.*

Elva (*dancing round him*). You have lost! You have lost!

[*She dances round and up to him, and looks down at him, laughing.*

Now I shall not love you.

[*The* Prince *does not stir.*

Why do you not move? Are you so tired? (*She laughs mockingly.*) Oh! you cannot love me, or you would not stop dancing. Come! (*She takes his hand—she shivers.*) Oh! it is cold—cold! Oh! why is it so cold?

[*She looks up bewildered, and a few paces away sees the spirit of the* PRINCE *looking at her with mournful eyes.*

[*The moon rises.*

SPIRIT (*mournfully*). Oh! help me back again; for it is not yet my time to leave the earth.

ELVA. Oh! what have you done? Where have you gone, for you are white and thin as water? I cannot bear to see you so. Be as you were before—oh! be as you were before.

SPIRIT. It is you who have done this. Oh! why have you done this to me?

[*The* SPIRIT *gradually fades.* ELVA *rushes towards it with outspread arms. She falls blindly against the old* WOOD-CUTTER.

W. What is this?

[ELVA *points, terrified, at the body of the* PRINCE.

W. What is this? What has happened? I had a wild dream. I dreamt I heard you crying. Then I woke, and the crying still went on. But it was not you I heard crying then. It was a human voice. So I came here.

ELVA. Oh! help me!—help him! See!

[*The* WOOD-CUTTER *bends over the body of the* PRINCE. *A pause. He raises his head. He speaks sternly.*

W. How can I help you? He is dead.

ELVA. Dead? What is that?

W. Go back—go back. Go back from where you came. Go back to your dancing for ever and ever.

Not you, but I am to blame. I should not have brought you amongst mortals. But now you must do no more harm. Go back—go back.

ELVA. Not till he has spoken. I will not go.

W. Then you must stay for ever—for there is no bringing back spirit to flesh again.

[*He moves away.* ELVA *casts herself on the ground before him.*

ELVA. Oh! make him speak to me.

[*The* WOOD-CUTTER *pauses. He seems to be thinking profoundly. After a little he says gravely:*

There may be a way. Wait.

[*He goes off.* ELVA *remains seated by the body with blank, staring eyes.*

[*The* WOOD-CUTTER *returns, carrying in one hand the casket containing the* PRINCE'S *heart, in the other a small phial.*

W. This may be of use. I do not know. It is a potion centuries old given to me once by a wise woman. I have guarded it preciously ever since. I had forgotten. It is said to restore the dead to life. I do not know.

ELVA. Oh! give it to me!—give it to me!

W. But it must be mixed with human tears or it may work evil. What can we do? I have shed all mine, and you have none.

ELVA. Oh! give it to me!—give!

W. You must do what you can. Here is the Prince's heart, locked in this box. Take it out—place it on the body and pour upon it three drops of the potion. Now, I will go—for whatever you do you must do alone.

[*He moves away sorrowfully.*

[ELVA *seizes the phial.*

[*It contains a bright crimson liquid and is shaped like a glass ball.*

[ELVA *takes the heart and lays it on the body. She waits. For a short time there is no change. Then the* SPIRIT *of the* PRINCE *comes to the body and envelops it.*

[*The* PRINCE *stirs and looks round.*

[*The* PRINCE *rises.*

ELVA. (*She cries aloud with joy.*) Oh! I am glad —glad! Oh! how glad I am you have come back! Now we will play together again, and I will love you.

[*The* PRINCE *looks at her, but does not seem to hear. He goes out slowly as if he were in a trance without looking back.*

ELVA. Come back to me!—come back to me, for I love you!

[*Plaintive music.*

ELVA. Oh! why has he left me so? (*Pauses, looks wildly round.*) My eyes grow dim! What is happening? I cannot see clearly, and my eyes burn like fire! Are these tears? (*Feels her cheeks.*) Ah! now I understand!

[*She drops down in a sitting posture where the* PRINCE *had lain, staring straight in front of her, the tears falling fast.*

I HAVE LEARNT THE MEANING OF TEARS!

[*Plaintive music.*

CURTAIN.

THE POET, THE PAINTER AND THE WITCH-GIRL

CAST

PETER (the Painter).
PEREGRINE (the Poet).
PICKLE (the Pedlar).
BEETON (a Gardener).
MRS. BEETON (his Wife).
THE BEAUTIFUL GIRL.
MADRIALA (the Witch-girl).
FASHIONABLE LADIES, GOBLINS, LITTLE PEOPLE, etc.

ACT I

ACT I

Scene I

An Adams room in Mayfair.

The curtain rises to bright music. The large doors are thrown open, and two gorgeous liveried servants enter, ushering in some fashionable ladies. The servants bow to the ground and withdraw. The ladies look round at the pictures and pick up books of poems.

Chorus

Well I never! Did you ever! Ever-ever did you see
Such a wonderful collection? Heavens! Lawk-a-mussy me!
What a poet! *What* a painter! Glorious—exquisite—divine!
Isn't that a perfect portrait? How I wish that it were *mine*!
Here's his latest of the Duchess in a sort of Gainsborough hat:
Poor dear Mabel!—what a pity she can't *really* look like that!

[*The footmen enter and, bowing low, usher in the* Poet, Peregrine, *and the* Painter, Peter. *They are faultlessly dressed, but have a gloomy and bored expression. The fashionable ladies greet them with the utmost enthusiasm.*

Chorus

Wonderful, marvellous,
Scrumptious, amazing,
Glorious, elegant,
Hair-raising men !
One with his painting
Leaves us all fainting,
One knocks us down with his
Passionate pen.

You take our breath away !
Although we have to pay,
We do not care, we do not care ;
We worship and obey.
Oh ! Peter, paint me, do—
I simply dote on you !
And Mr. Poet, Peregrine,
Make verses for me too !

PETER. Good afternoon.

CHORUS OF LADIES. Oh ! did you hear ? He said "Good afternoon" ! How beautiful ! How apt ! How original ! It's the *best* thing I've heard for a long time !

1ST LADY. What a privilege it is to listen to the conversation of a *Really-Great-Man* !

2ND LADY. After the dreadful nonsense most people talk !

3RD LADY. Asphyxiating !

6TH LADY. Unbearable !

4TH LADY. Impossible !

3RD LADY. As I always say to my husband——

5TH LADY. My dear, do you mean to tell me that you ever say *anything* to your husband ?

2ND LADY. I make it a rule only to talk politics to mine.

4TH LADY. Poor darlings! That is all they're fit for.

1ST LADY. They can't *really* understand anything else.

5TH LADY. Oh! hush! hush! The Poet is going to speak.

[*They gather eagerly round* PEREGRINE.

PER. (*after trying hard to think of something—suddenly*). It's a fine day.

[*The* LADIES *gasp enthusiastically.*

CHORUS. Isn't that a gem? Nobody else ever says such things. I must really remember that.

PER. But it *is* a fine day.

1ST LADY. All the more wonderful. So few things are both brilliant and true.

4TH LADY. Dear, dearest Mr. Peter and Mr. Peregrine, you are really both quite—quite too—too extraordinary for words.

P. and P. (*together—moodily*). Yes, I suppose we are.

5TH LADY. What can it *feel* like to be so great?

PETER (*slowly*). Like—like a lobster which has lost its shell.

PER. Or like being the monument on one's own tomb.

PETER. Or being a living cinematograph.

5TH LADY. I don't in the least understand what you mean—you clever pets—but it sounds too wonderfully lovely.

PEREGRINE. Yes, it *sounds* nice, but——

PETER. It's not really quite as pleasant as it sounds.

[*They relapse into gloomy silence.*

CHORUS. Oh! oh! How delightful—how amusing you both are!

P. and P. (*mournfully*). Yes.

2ND LADY (*coyly*). Mr. Peter?

PETER (*apprehensively*). Oh !—er—yes—well—can I do anything for you ?

2ND LADY. Don't you think I'm looking *rather* nice this afternoon ?

PETER (*mournfully but politely*). Very.

2ND LADY (*coaxingly*). Oh ! then won't you paint me looking just like this ? There's a dear ! I simply couldn't *bear* it if the Duchess was in the Academy and I wasn't. Only, you know, I *can't* sit for more than ten minutes at a time. It makes my nose red. Still, I daresay two sittings will be enough. And I'll give you a hundred pounds a sitting. So you will, *won't* you ? That's all right. To-morrow, then, at two.

[*She skips off before* PETER *can answer.*

PETER (*in a loud whisper to* PEREGRINE, *gloomily*). I knew this would happen. Why haven't I the courage to say no ?

1ST LADY (*to* PEREGRINE). You *must* come and hear me recite your wonderful, wonderful poems at my At Home on Wednesday. I think even you will be pleased. *Do.*

[*She runs off.*

3RD LADY. Remember the 18th !

4TH LADY. You are lunching to-morrow. Don't forget !

5TH LADY. I'm sending you my blank-verse play, a little thing in ten acts. Please tell me *exactly* what you think of it.

6TH LADY. I want to buy all your water-colours for the next twenty years.

7TH LADY. You are both coming down to me for this week-end !

[*As they go out,* PETER *and* PEREGRINE *bow repeatedly but say nothing. They then sink into two chairs exhausted.*

P. and P. (*simultaneously*). Ouf !

PETER (*drawing out an immense engagement-book and going through the pages feverishly*). I simply can't keep up with it !

PEREGRINE (*grimly*). I lost mine yesterday !

PETER (*dejectedly*). If *only* I wasn't such a success !

PEREGRINE (*still more dejectedly*). What about *me*, then ?

PETER. It's not my fault. I've tried to paint badly, but it's simply no use.

PEREGRINE. None at all. I struggle to write rot, but my poems grow more and more exquisite. We're geniuses, my boy, that's what it is, worse luck ! There's no getting away from it.

PETER. If it were only *half* the year. But never to get a day off !

PER. It's worse than being Royalty.

PETER. Even if we locked the studio doors they'd mob us in the street.

PER. Besides, that would be rude. Let us remember our manners, dear Peter, even if we are bored. Only it really is too dreadful to be so worshipped.

PETER. Oh ! those public dinners !

PER. And our hideously large banking accounts ! Ugh !

PETER (*agonised*). Did you hear what she offered me ? A hundred pounds a sitting !

PER. And those millions and millions of Press notices !

PETER. All favourable !

PER. Without exception. (*Desperately*) I pasted in the last one yesterday. (*He points to a row of enormous richly bound volumes in the book-case.*) I should like to burn them all. Even the critics worship us.

[*They both groan. A pause.*

PETER (*springing up*). Peregrine ! I can't stand it any longer.

PER. (*without enthusiasm*). What are you going to do?

PETER. I'm going—I'm going—to—— (*He thinks a moment—then with a sudden burst of inspiration*) The ties we bought yesterday—let's put them on!

PER. The ties!—the ties! Yes—yes——

[*He rings the bell. The footmen appear.*

P. and P. (*together*). Bring us those ties we bought yesterday. You know.

[*They leave the room quickly and reappear at once. Each carries a small parcel done up in tissue paper which he solemnly hands with a profound bow to* PETER *and* PEREGRINE. PETER *and* PEREGRINE *tear off their collars and simultaneously put on the ties. They dance with joy and clap their hands. They both do a dance movement whilst putting on the ties. They dance all through their remarks to each other.*

PER. (*excitedly*). And the next thing——

PETER. Is to get rid of this.

[*He tears off his frock-coat.* PEREGRINE *does the same.*

And this.

[*He dances on his top-hat. So does* PEREGRINE.

PER. And to get right away for ever?

PETER. Yes—or *almost* for ever!

PER. No more Academies!

PETER. No more pretty ladies!

PER. No more top-hats!

PETER. No more Press notices!

PER. No more *anything*!

PETER. What pictures I shall make!

PER. And what poems!
PETER. The kind the critics hate.
PER. And when we come back—
PETER. If we *ever* come back!—
PER. We shall be so light-hearted—
PETER. And talk such nonsense—
PER. That they won't ask us to any more serious parties—
PETER. Or Charity Matinées—
PER. Or Complimentary Dinners.
PETER. Never again.
PER. Never no more.
PETER. Hurrah! Hurrah!

Song

We're going off together.
Hurrosh! Hurrah! Hurroo!
For we're really far too clever
To waste our time on you—
And Peregrine and Peter
Have better things to do.—
Yes, Peregrine and Peter
Have other things to do.

[*Few steps of dance.*

We've crumpled up our collars,
We've trampled on our hats!
Hang women, wine and dollars,
Hotels and furnished flats!
Don't ask us out to dinner,
For we ain't got no cravats.—
We don't want any dinners,
And we've lost our best cravats.

[*Few steps of dance.*

Then hurry, flurry, scurry,
And skip along with me,
For I know a deep dark forest
Which stretches to the sea,

Where no kind folk will call on us,
Or ask us out to tea—
Where Duchesses won't trouble us,
Or ask us out to tea.—
Where *nobody* will call on us,
Or ask us out to tea.

[*They dance out.*

Scene II

A forest glade. Sitting under an elm tree is Madriala. *Her dress is the colour of a peacock's breast, her neck and feet are bare. Her light-brown hair hangs loosely over her shoulders and a garland encircles her head.*

Song

Mad. I am all alone and singing in the sunlight,
Smiling in the sunlight, singing all alone.
Sweet, sweet, sweet, the day is made for singing:
June is my lover, Summer is my own.

Birds. Lover, lover, lover, Summer is her own.

Mad. Lightly through the woodlands, green and gold for dancing,
Danced I this morning, moss beneath my feet,
Moss, green moss beneath my feet quick dancing:
June is my lover, Summer songs are sweet.

Birds. Summer, Summer, Summer, Summer songs are sweet.

Mad. Sweet, sweet, sweet, June is made for singing,
All the hours, the golden hours, are full of song,
White, green, golden, sunlit songs of summer:
June is my lover, Summer days are long.

Birds. Sweet, sweet, sweet, sweet, Summer days are long.

[*As she finishes each refrain, the birds of various notes—blackbirds, thrushes, finches*

and linnets—whistle the refrain after her. She looks up into the trees, smiling.

[*At the end of the last refrain* PEREGRINE *and* PETER *appear at the back of the stage and listen to her. They fall on their knees in front of her, open their mouths and try to speak, but words refuse to come.*

[MADRIALA *looks at them seriously without saying a word. The* BIRDS *repeat the refrain of her song again.* PEREGRINE *and* PETER *remain on their knees gazing at her.* PETER *shows signs of cramp in one knee and begins to move.*

MAD. (*bursts out laughing*). What curious people you are. And why are you so dusty inside ?

PER. You see, we have been in a dusty place for a very long time. Oh ! beautiful maiden !

PER. And though we have never seen you before——

PETER. As far as we *know*. Yet we feel—we feel——

PER. Somehow that we have never seen anybody else !

PETER. Yet one thing is quite certain. Only you can undust us.

MAD. (*clasping her knees, she speaks sharply*). Nonsense ! People must do their own dirty work. Come ! give your souls a shake at once and get rid of all this dust. I really can't talk to you in such an untidy state.

[PETER *and* PEREGRINE *shake themselves solemnly—then each other. They stand on their heads, turn three somersaults and bow low before* MADRIALA. *A cloud of dust escapes from them like the dust from the pages of a book. Tears of relief roll down their cheeks.*

P. and P. Oh! what a relief! How light we feel!

PER. Like a carpet which has been beaten!

PETER. Like something which never has been dirty at all.

MAD. (*looking at them critically*). You are certainly improved.

[*They bow again. She clasps her hands.*

In fact nothing could be nicer. But I should say you both want a lot of looking after. I am in need of occupation. I have done nothing at all for the last hundred years. So *I* will look after you. But you must promise not to bother me in any way.

P. and P. (*timidly*). But who *are* you?

MAD. (*frowning*). What a silly question! I dislike answering questions above all things. Still, you've shaken yourselves so nicely that I *will* tell you. Well, I'm the Witch-girl. I was old at the beginning of the world and I grow younger ever year. That's all.

P. and P. (*still timidly*). And your name?

MAD. Madriala—generally. But I change my name according to my mood. Sometimes I am called Jane, but not often.

P. and P. Then, Madriala, we will come and live with you. Oh! what ecstasy!

MAD. Of course I know all about you—because I know everything. (*To* PETER) You are a painter.

PETER (*ecstatically*). Yes!

MAD. Very well. You shall paint wonderful pictures of me all day long. And you, Peregrine, the poet—

[PEREGRINE *bows, too overcome to speak.*

—shall write the most beautiful poems about me that have ever been known. And in return I will dance for you.

PETER. What rapture!

MAD. And sing you all the songs I know. There are a great many. The stars taught me some of my best before the world was made.

PER. Oh! glory!

MAD. And I will teach you how never to grow old.

P. and P. We *never* will.

MAD. Or be dusty.

P. and P. No.

MAD. Or stupid.

P. and P. No—no.

MAD. And, in fact, I will do everything for your good.

P. and P. Oh! oh!

[*They are too overcome to speak.*

MAD. On the whole, I like you much better than finches and hedgehogs. I have seen nothing else for a very long time.

PETER (*shaking with joy*). But there is nothing in the world left to wish for!

PER. Nothing—nothing!

MAD. (*practically*). Oh yes, there is. I *told* you that you wanted looking after. The first thing to do is to find somewhere to live.

P. and P. Of course—of course!

MAD. *I* never live anywhere.

P. and P. Then *we* won't, either.

MAD. But that would give you colds. Do you know the strip of country between here and Fairyland? No?

P. and P. (*hesitatingly*). I don't *think* we do.

MAD. I thought not, because only fourteen people do in the whole world and most of them have forgotten. Anyhow, I'm sure that you're not either of you any one of them.

PER. (*a little timidly*). I believe I *did* know the way there once.

PETER (*jealously*). What nonsense! As though you wouldn't have told me!

PER. That was before we were such a social success.

MAD. A social success—what's that? Is it very nice?

PETER. It's the thing from which we're escaping. It means—it means——

PER. Being squabbled over for luncheon parties by beautiful ladies——

PETER. Who admire your work long before they've seen it.

PER. It means keeping a secretary——

PETER. To answer invitations all day long.

PER. By post, telegram and special messenger——

PETER. *And* telephone——

PER. *And* telephone. Oh, Lord! *And* telephone!

PETER. It means week-end parties——

PER. Which seem to last a year.

PETER. Eating too much;

PER. Drinking too much,

PETER. Staying too late in bed,

PER. And having to write poems in gilded visitors' books.

MAD. But why should you bother to live so uncomfortably?

PETER. Because we are too amiable.

PER. And too weak and too polite and too easily bullied.

PETER. Because we hate hurting other people's feelings—even when they've got none.

PER. We were just trapped like hens in a chalk circle.

PETER. Until we really *could* bear it no longer.

PER. Then——

PETER. We stepped out.

PER. And here we are!

MAD. Well, it all sounds extremely silly to me.

P. and P. (*earnestly*). So it is—so it was.

MAD. But I daresay you know best. Anyhow, we've wandered from the point. By the by, what *was* it we were talking about?

PETER. Fairyland.

PER. You said you would show us how to get there.

MAD. Oh yes. Well, I know Mr. Beeton, a very kind, polite old gardener who has a cottage there. It *is* a most *lovely* cottage with a pond and a thatched roof and a pelican and some lame ducks. It will suit us exactly. I am quite sure Mr. Beeton will give it to us if we ask him, because he is so fond of me and is so polite. Then *he* can be my gardener and Mrs. Beeton can cook for us. Mrs. Beeton is his wife. She has an awful temper. In fact, I don't quite know what we shall do about her, but I daresay it will be all right. Isn't it a charming plan? Do you agree?

P. and P. (*ecstatically*). Of *course* we do! Nothing—nothing—*nothing* could be more delightful!

MAD. And you must both promise to love me always very much whatever I do, even when I'm cross.

P. and P. Of course—of course!

[*They both make an attempt to kneel at her feet, but she stops them.*

MAD. And never find fault with anything?

P. and P. But how *could* we?

MAD. And not to get peevish thinking of the time when you were—a—a—what do you call it?—social success.

[*They cannot answer from emotion.*

MAD. And to be so happy that sparks will fly out of your heads and your heels.

PETER (*humbly*). We're rather out of practice, but we'll try—we'll try.

MAD. And then if ever I should get tired of you——

[*They hang their heads miserably.*

As I *may* perhaps—in the course of the next hundred years.

[*They look more cheerful.*

You will have stored up enough happiness to keep you warm for ever.

P. and P. Oh! oh! Yes.

MAD. And will anyhow have nothing to complain of.

P. and P. Complain? As though we could even contemplate such a thing!

MAD. Then we'll start at once. We've been dawdling here far too long already.

Song

MAD. Light, light, light,
As the wild bee's flight,
I poise on my toe and away out of sight. . . .
Out of sight, out of mind,
You'll be left behind!
Oh! clumsy people of human-kind!

PETER. But away we'll go
Though heavy of toe,
Though clumsy, stupid and worn and slow,
To the little cot
In an elfin spot
Which fairies know, though the world knows not.

PER. There will we be,
Peter and me,
With the Witch-girl to keep us company!
The year's at play,
Up and away,
For we never were young as we are to-day!

[*They dance out.*

Scene III

The cottage on the borders of Fairyland. Old Beeton *is pottering about in the garden among the flowers, whistling to himself.* Mrs. Beeton *watches him from the window. She is shrewish-looking with a long nose, greyish hair scraped well back from her forehead, a tight brown dress with large bone buttons down the front, a small black shawl and worsted mittens. She speaks in a shrill voice.*

Mr. B. (*to himself*). Them cal-cel-hairy-ers are the curse of my life. The yeller ones allus comes up where the red should go, and the red 'uns—why, there ain't no managin' them at all. Such well-behaved flowers as they look too! But genteel is as genteel *does*, I say! My pink geraniums now! They're the pride of my life, they is.

Mrs. B. (*suddenly*). Well, Bill—idling about as usual, I suppose.

Mr. B. (*conciliatingly*). Idlin'—my dear! Now, what's gone an' put a notion like *that* into your little head? 'Aven't I been out since four o'clock a-chasin' the caterpillars out of the cabbages?

Mrs. B. You've been out since four, right enough—but how long for did you sit a-smoking under the hedge?

Mr. B. Only one pipe, Eliza—only one pipe.

Mrs. B. And who was it I caught napping not half an hour ago? A fair disgrace, I calls it.

Mr. B. Well, you can't say as the garden's not nicely kept, Eliza.

Mrs. B. It ain't much to be proud of. Why, I counted twelve bits of groundsel all myself in the rose-bed yesterday, and seven bits of chickweed in the cabbage-patch. And that's not all, I daresay.

Mr. B. (*sorrowfully*). You don't say so, Eliza! My eyes ain't what they used to be, and that's a fact!

But groundsel! It do break my heart, does groundsel. I'll run and have him out.

[*He starts to run stiffly.*

MRS. B. (*scornfully*). Run! at your age! With your room-a-ticks and all! I wonder you bean't ashamed of yourself, behaving like a two-year-old!

MR. B. (*almost in tears*). You shouldn't hurl my age in my teeth, Eliza. It ain't manners. I never do yours, I'm sure.

MRS. B. (*grimly*). I should just like to hear you—that's all! Have you fed the pelican?

MR. B. (*meekly*). Yes, Eliza.

MRS. B. I'm—well—I expect you did it at the wrong time. And the splints for the lame ducks?

MR. B. I'm making them, Eliza. You do flurry a chap!

MRS. B. You're always puttin' off things, that's what's the matter with you. The only thing you didn't put off was getting born, and you might have waited for *that*.

MR. B. Well, you wouldn't 'ave 'ad me to exercise your tongue upon, an' that wouldn't 'a' suited you, Eliza.

MRS. B. Precious good thing for you as I've *got* a tongue, or where should we be now, I should like to know? Starving, or precious near it. Thank 'Evings as you don't a-do the cookin'—dinner once a year we should get, I 'spect.

MR. B. (*sighing*). Well, we can't all be Elizas, Lizzie. Like pears, some of us gets sleepy like—some is sharp an' tasty, same as you—others are sweet as sweet, like Miss Madriala.

MRS. B. (*more good-humouredly*). What's become of that there gad-about young baggage? She ain't been 'ere for months.

MR. B. It's more'n a year since she came this way.

MRS. B. 'Ope she 'asn't got into mischief. Got married or something silly.

MR. B. (*firmly*). Miss Madriala won't ever get married—too much sense she has.

MRS. B. (*with dignity*). An' what may you mean by that, Bill?

MR. B. (*innocently*). Nothing, dearie, but what I said. Madriala's got lots o' sense, bless her!—though you mightn't think it.

MRS. B. (*crossly*). She's got no sense at all. She's just a silly, spoilt, wilful, good-for-nothing hussy with a way with her. An' she'll come to a bad end from not listenin' to her elders, which is me.

MR. B. Maybe you're right, Eliza. Lord! how fond that young lady is of strawberries and cream! I've got some fine ones a-coming on—so I hope she'll turn up soon.

MRS. B. (*off her guard*). I allus keeps a lot o' cream ready in case she runs in sudden-like.

MR. B. (*slyly*). You spoil her, Eliza, that's what you do. She's a great deal too much spoilt. She'll come to a bad end.

MRS. B. What nonsense, Bill! Bad ends! You'll come to a bad end afore Madriala! Madriala's got lots o' sense, don't you make no mistake.

Mr. B. Well, well! I must go and look after those there strawberries an' pull up a groundsel or two.

MRS. B. You're allus beginnin' things as ought to 'ave been finished long ago. That's what's the matter with you. Well, supper'll be ready in five minutes. You'd best clean yourself up and quick about it. Not that you don't deserve none.

[*She slams the window and withdraws into the house.*

Song

MR. B. My wife she's always finding fault, and what's a chap to do ?
For be as cheerful as I may she *does* make things look blue.
Oh ! lumme, can't she scold, my lads ! To hear the way she talks,
You'd think the flowers 'ud shrivel up and wither on their stalks—
Oh ! she's enough to nip the flowers a-blooming on their stalks !

I am a harmless gar-de-ner—a kind, polite old boy,
To weed the beds and clip the trees it is my only joy.
I never stoops to kill a slug—I wouldn't hurt a fly—
A cheery, civil, chirpy chap—that's just the likes of I—
You've never seen, not anywhere, a chap the likes of I.

And yet my missus, she complains and worrits night and day,
And when she starts a-scolding, lor' ! it makes my hair turn grey !
Yet what's the use o' worritin' ? My name is cheery Bill,
So, hip, hurrah ! my hearty boys, come, sing out with a will—
I'm not a-going to mope, not I—but sing and laugh I *will*.

[Mrs. B. *calls him sharply. He exits, shrugging his shoulders despairingly, into the house. On his exit* MADRIALA *dances on. She is*

followed by PETER *and* PEREGRINE, *both wearily dragging themselves along.*

MAD. (*gaily*). This is the cottage. Isn't it a perfect *duck*?

PETER. It is indeed! (*Aside*) Though my feet *are* sore. Oh!

PER. (*frowning at him*). Ssh! It is delightful—exquisite.

[*He limps forward.*

MAD. (*brightly*). And we don't feel a bit as though we'd come fifty miles, do we?

P. and P. (*hurriedly*). Oh no, not at all!

MAD. I wonder whether dear, nice, kind, polite Mr. Beeton is in?

[*She goes to the door and, placing her hand to her mouth, she trills a note like a bird, then, laughing, goes back and stands between* PETER *and* PEREGRINE. *Old* BEETON *appears.*

MR. B. (*quavering delightedly*). Why, if it isn't Madriala! Well now!

MAD. Yes, Mr. Beeton—it's Madriala.

MR. B. Well, there now—it's a rare time since you was here last, that it is! The pelican he fairly moulted a-missing you, he did. We've all been a-missing of you, miss. Even my old woman, though she wouldn't let on.

MAD. The dear pelican! And dear Mrs. Beeton! How pleased I shall be to see her again! Well, these are my friends. We've danced fifty miles to see you. At least I danced and they followed.

PER. Oh dear! my feet!

PETER (*frowning at him*). Ssh!

Mr. B. (*kindly*). I expect you're a bit tired, sir.

MAD. (*graciously*). Tired? That's something that happens to mortals, isn't it! I don't know what *tired* means.

MR. B. And what may you be wanting here, Missie?

MAD. (*coaxingly*). The cottage, if you please, Mr. Beeton—to live in for ever. Oh! *do* give it to us—we want it so *very* much. *Please* say yes.

MR. B. (*scratching his head*). Well, now, I hardly knows what to say, miss. You see, my missus——

MAD. Oh! we'll put it all right with Mrs. Beeton, indeed we will.

MR. B. (*hesitatingly*). I *hardly* likes.

MAD. Oh yes, you do! Dear, sweet, *kind* Mr. Beeton, you shall be our gardener, you know. And then of course, since we're going to live for ever, you'll live for ever too.

MR. B. (*generously*). Well, there it is! You know as I can't refuse you anything, miss! Never *could* refuse a body as asks me pretty. That's partly how I came to marry Eliza. Just step in, miss.

[MRS. BEETON *enters and stands in the doorway.*

MRS. B. (*sharply*). What's this as you can't refuse, William?

MAD. (*quickly*). Good evening, Mrs. Beeton. What do you think! Dear, kind, good, generous, *darling* Mr. Beeton has just given us the cottage for our very own.

MRS. B. (*angrily*). Given you the cottage? And what right has he to be a-going and a-giving away the cottage? Don't it belong to me as much as to him? I'll give *him* away if he don't look out!

MAD. It was really done as a sort of pleasant surprise for *you.*

MR. B. (*meekly*). You see, I've *given* it now, Eliza. You wouldn't 'ave me go back on my word?

MRS. B. Pleasant surprise! You don't get round me in that way. Come, clear out, the whole lot of you!

MAD. Oh! but you *can't* send us away like that, dear, pretty Mrs. Beeton. I did want you to stay with us and cook for us for ever and ever. And those two dear creatures (*she indicates* PETER) are so tired (*and* PEREGRINE), *so* hungry and so footsore.

MRS. B. And who may *they* be, I should like to know?

MAD. This is Peter the Painter—

[PETER *comes forward and bows elaborately.*

—and *that* is Peregrine the Poet.

[PEREGRINE *bows also.*

MRS. B. I don't 'old with no poets and painters, I *don't.* Too many idle chaps knocking about here already.

[*She looks meaningly at her husband.*

P. and P. (*each catching one of her hands*). Charming Mrs. Beeton, *do* let us stay here!

MAD. Lovely Mrs. Beeton—if you stay with us you will go on growing lovelier. For no one ever grows old where *I* am.

PETER. I will paint your portrait.

PER. I will write a sonnet about you.

MAD. And we won't give you any extra trouble whatsoever. In fact, we shall be the greatest help in the house.

[*Caressing her.*

MRS. B. Well, when you wheedle me like that—

[MADRIALA *throws her arms round her neck.*

—I just *have* to give way.

MAD. I knew you would, you sweet thing!

MRS. B. But remember, if you make yourselves a nuisance——

MAD., P. and P. (*all together*). We won't—they won't!

MRS. B. (*to* PEREGRINE). Splashing ink——

PER. (*eagerly*). I'll cover the floor with blotting-paper!

MRS. B. (*to* PETER). Or making a nasty mess with your paints——

PETER (*offended*). I am always *most* careful.

MRS. B. (*to* MADRIALA). Or teasin' or 'indering me in my work or hencouraging old Bill there of drinkin' too much cream——

MAD. (*wheedling*). Only on Sundays—you'll let us have too much on Sundays, won't you, Mrs. Beeton?

MRS. B. Out you'll go, all of you.

[MADRIALA, PETER *and* PEREGRINE *join hands and dance round her.*

ALL. Yes, yes, yes.

MR. B. (*tremulously*). It's cheery as Christmas oughter be when you come, my dear.

MRS. B. (*sharply*). Now don't you start a-jabberin' about Christmas—just go in an' lay some plates on the table.

PETER. Oh! this is Heaven!

MRS. B. You'd better try it a little longer before you say that.

PER. And you are an angel.

MRS. B. So I am, but it ain't everyone as can see it.

MAD. And we're *here*!

PETER. Hurroosh!

PER. Hurrah!

MR. B. (*feebly from the kitchen*). Hurroo!

[*They join hands and dance round her.*

MRS. B. But in you go now—the pack of you. I can't keep supper waiting.

[*Exit* MRS. BEETON *indoors. Music cue.*

Song

MAD. I've got my way—I've got my way!
Here will we live for ever!
For ever and ever and a day—
There's not a soul can say me nay,
For I am much too clever.

[*Dance steps.*

MAD., P. and P. Here am I and here are you
In the garden settled:
Mrs. Beeton for a few
Moments was quite nettled! . . .
Mrs. Beeton is so kind
That she really doesn't mind.

[*Dance steps.*

MAD. Violas and roses
Cover all the ground,
Hedge of briar closes
All the garden round.
Here are buttercups and stocks—
Frilly pinks and hollyhocks!
Sweet—sweet, ah! sweet—
We'll dance on flowers with bare feet!

MR. B., P. and P. She's got her way—she's got her way—
Here will we live for ever!
There's none can say Madriala nay—
For she is far too clever!

[*They go out dancing in a line as the sun sinks. The goblins enter from all sides and do a fantastic dance at back of stage.*

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

Scene I

A room in the cottage. It is low-roofed with oak beams and bright hangings. The table is laid for breakfast. The door leading into the garden stands open. Peter *and* Peregrine *are discovered seated.* Mrs. Beeton *enters with arms akimbo.*

Mrs. B. (*angrily*). That Witch-girl's a nuisance—that's what she is. I've had about enough of her, I have!

P. and P. (*together, in horror*). Oh! Mrs. Beeton!

Mrs. B. So unreasonable as she is—you'd never believe. Plague me day and night, she do—the minx!

P. and P. Oh! Mrs. Beeton!

Mrs. B. (*huffily*). Oh! of course *you* stick up for her. Bill's just as bad. Crazy about her, you are, the lot of you. Just because she's got big eyes. I never had eyes like that when I was a girl. Wouldn't have thought it decent.

Peter. But, you know, you're really very fond of her yourself, Mrs. Beeton.

Mrs. B. Oh yes! She has a way with her, I don't deny. But that headless! She took all my nice cream last night for them there goblins. Stood a large pan of it out in the garden, she did!

Peter (*delighted*). How *charming* of her!

Per. (*ditto*). How delightful!

MRS. B. All very well for you to talk like that, but you won't think it so charming nor so delightful when you don't get no cream with your strawberries, which you won't, nor she neither.

PETER. Madriala is well worth a little discomfort, Mrs. Beeton.

MRS. B. Well, I don't think so, and I say so straight.

[*She flounces out of the room.* PETER *and* PEREGRINE *look at each other in consternation.*

P. and P. What, oh! *what* is to be done?

[MADRIALA *enters with her arms full of flowers, followed by* BEETON *carrying flowers also. She tells him to place them on the table, where she places hers.*

MAD. Now you can go.

[*Exit* BEETON.

(*Rather pettishly*). Good morning.

PETER. Good morning, dearest Madriala.

PER. Good morning, wonderful Madriala.

PETER. How beautiful you look!

MAD. (*paying no attention*). Mrs. Beeton is quite unendurable.

PETER (*timidly*). It was the cream.

PER. (*soothingly*). *Nothing* but the cream.

MAD. The cream! Fancy grudging a few drops of cream to the poor, dear, darling goblins! Whoever heard such meanness!

PETER. You see, Mrs. Beeton knows you don't like your strawberries without cream, Madriala dear.

MAD. Oh yes! Of course you back up Mrs. Beeton—you always do.

PETER. Oh! Madriala!

PER. Oh! Madriala, as though you were not our only thought.

MAD. (*pleased for a moment*). You are not bad old things in your way.

[PETER *and* PEREGRINE *rise and throw themselves at her feet. She takes an arm of both. To* PETER.

How many pictures have you painted of me by now, Peter?

PETER. Hundreds and hundreds. When I have done them, the goblins carry them away to Fairyland, for they are so beautiful only fairies can understand them. In fact, I don't think mortals could see them at all.

MAD. (*crossly*). Then what's the use of them? The fairies know all about me. I want to have my pictures in the Academy.

PETER (*humbly*). I will try to make them less beautiful, Madriala.

MAD. (*still cross*). I think you are both very stupid creatures.

[PETER *and* PEREGRINE *take large silk handkerchiefs out of their pockets and wipe their eyes.*

MAD. (*penitently*). I believe my name is Sarah Jane this morning.

[*She sits down in silence at the breakfast table and begins to pour out coffee.* PETER *and* PEREGRINE *sit down sadly one on each side of her.*

MAD. (*suddenly*). Do you know you are both growing bald?

[PETER *and* PEREGRINE *put their hands to their heads in some alarm.*

PETER. Surely you are mistaken, Madriala. My locks *feel* as luxuriant as ever.

PER. I have had a charming wig specially designed for me in the event of such a contingency arising. But I cannot think that I require it *yet*.

MAD. But a wig won't help you if you lose your teeth—as you are both doing.

PETER (*reproachfully*). Are you not a little unkind, Madriala?

MAD. (*jumping up*). *There* you are! Didn't I *say* so? You contradict and thwart me in every way, and if I say the *least* thing you fly into a passion!

[PETER *and* PEREGRINE *subside sorrowfully into their chairs.*

MAD. I begin to have enough of it.

[*Music cue.*

Song

MAD. My wings they are clipped, alas! I cannot fly,
Weary as a cage-bird, a prisoned bird am I!
Longing for the forest, *aching* for the sky,
And if I may not spread my wings I'll lay me down and die.

I know a song, a sweet song—I cannot sing it here—
For heaviness of heart and the wind's voice in my ear;
The wind's voice which calls me, so happy and so clear,
Calling me away in the green time o' the year.

Oh! men with your wisdom, you're weary, blind and slow;
Open wide your windows, loose me, let me go;

For the wood-birds are singing and the singing winds do blow,
And whither I would wander I neither care nor know.

[*She bursts into tears.* PEREGRINE *and* PETER, *much concerned, try to comfort her. They dry her tears with their handkerchiefs.*

MAD. It's no use! My name is Dolores now, and I'm ever so miserable.

PETER. But why, why? We've been so happy together up to now.

Mad. (*impatiently*). That's the very reason why I am unhappy. I can't bear doing the same thing for so long together.

PER. But think of *us* and how unhappy you are making us.

MAD. Darling Peter, darling Peregrine, I'm so sorry, but you see how it is. I've never lived under a roof before. I mean not in this way.

PETER. But you'll never leave us, Madriala?

MAD. (*hesitating*). Isn't it better I should leave you than remain in my Sarah-Jane-Dolores mood?

PER. In every mood you are adorable.

MAD. That's not true, and you know it.

PETER. But you know it's true that we worship you.

MAD. (*miserably*). Oh yes! That's true enough.

PETER. Then can't you be satisfied?

MAD. Of course I can't. That's why I'm a witch-girl and remain young. Mortals get satisfied, and so they grow old. There's the difference.

PER. But aren't you a little sorry for us, Madriala?

MAD. (*gulping down her sobs*). Yes, I—am—and (*resolutely*) so I shall remain. (*She smiles once more.*) You are nice, dear, sweet, darling creatures, both of

you, and I'm sorry I've worried you. *Now* I'm Madriala again!

[*She kisses them both.* MRS. BEETON *enters, very angry, followed by* MR. BEETON, *who looks nervous.*

MRS. BEETON (*to* MADRIALA). Oh! there you are, you naughty, mischievous, saucy hussy, you!

MAD. (*flaring up*). How *dare* you speak to me like that?

MRS. B. And how dare you waste my lovely thick cream on those nasty goblins? You haven't a bit of consideration for anyone, you haven't, and I've about had enough of it.

MAD. I think you're a horrid, cross, crusty old lady. And I shall certainly give the goblins cream *whenever* I feel inclined.

MRS. B. And you're a spoilt, headless, good-for-nothing minx, and I wish as you'd never come here, that's what I do.

MR. B., P. and P. Oh! hush! hush! Eliza, Mrs. Beeton!

MAD. (*thoroughly roused*). None of you are to be endured for a moment. Do you think I *want* to stay here? Do you think I *want* to live with such fusty, dusty, crusty mortals? I shall go away and never come back.

P. and P. Oh! Madriala, Madriala, Madriala, don't go!—oh! don't go!

Mr. B. You 'ear what the gentlemen say? Don't go, missie.

[MRS. BEETON *stands, frowning.*

MAD. (*loftily*). If Mrs. Beeton will say she's sorry——

MRS. B. (*suffocating with rage*). Sorry! I'm only

sorry as I ever 'ad anything to do with you. Sorry! you baggage! You ought to have your ears boxed, and if you say another word I daresay you will.

PER. (*stepping forward indignantly*). This is too much! Mrs. Beeton, I am sorry to speak harshly, but I feel obliged to tell you that you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

MR. B. (*sadly but emphatically*). I've allus said as your tongue would do a mischief some day, Eliza.

MRS. B. (*turning on them furiously*). A nice lot you are, all of you! I'd turn you all out o' doors if I 'ad my way. I don't want ever to see the likes of any of you again, low-down, ungrateful, worthless lot you are, an' I don't know which of you is the worst.

MAD. (*coldly*). Well, I'm tired of you all, all of you. Human beings are hateful creatures. I hope I shall forget you all very soon. Good-bye. Whatever you do, don't come after me. I am going to look for other friends. In any case, I daresay you'll get on very well without me.

[*At the door.*

Farewell Song

Oh! the brown and ruddy apples and the gold on every tree!
And the road that has no ending, the long road for me.
Love was brown and ruddy and gold and crowned with light,
But he fears the dusty highway and the stark wind o' night.

But when I'm on the highway gone, I fear you'll call me back,
That you'll set your heart to follow and your thoughts upon my track.

—Oh no! you need not fear me, for when the last leaves fall,
I'll laugh with my new lover and not think of you at all.—

[*She disappears through the door.*

[MRS. BEETON *stands down L., holding her apron to her eyes.* BEETON *hides his face in his hands.* PETER *and* PEREGRINE *sink miserably into chairs.*

SCENE II

A pond in the fir woods, fringed with yellow and purple irises and a profusion of wild flowers.

Reclining on a mossy bank is a tall man with lank hair falling over his eyes. He wears a high pointed cap with a waving peacock's feather, his shoes are curved at the toes and have red heels, his coat is laced with red and yellow ribbons; near him, half hidden by the long grass, is a tray laden with all sorts of glittering things.

[*Music.*

Song

PICKLE. I've lost my favourite dream, good lack!
She was so swift I might not hold her.
I run hot-footed on her track,
But she has wings on either shoulder.
She fled from me last Spring,
And now the Summer's done:
Out upon the crafty thing!
She has wings and I have none.

That's one song, now let's try another.

My feet were sore upon the roads I travelled up an' down,
When it was close on midnight I reached a fairy-town:
—" Pedlar, pretty pedlar, have you dreams to sell? "—
Sweeter than an apple, ma'am, sounder than a bell!

Fairy gold it lasts not long, silver have I none,
Who's to pay the reckoning when the day is done?
The inn doors are bolted, the host snug in bed,
There's moss in the forest, I'll lie there instead,
With a stone at my feet and a clod at my head.

And that will be the end of all my wanderings, I daresay.

[MADRIALA *enters, and gazes round her delightedly. She stands looking down at the* PEDLAR. *The* PEDLAR *stares back. She is annoyed at this and walks slowly round him, her head in the air.*

PICKLE (*mockingly*). Oh! oh! You'll fall over me, if you're not careful. There's not much worth looking at in the sky, whereas I *am*. Still, that's your concern, not mine.

[*Stares blankly in front of him as before.*

MAD. (*sitting down beside him*). I don't think *you* are at all worth looking at, but you might look at *me*.

PICKLE. You have interrupted me. I was trying to catch an owl. I can always make any animal come to me by singing to it. I could make you come, if it were worth my while. At this moment I'd rather you went away.

MAD. (*slowly*). Do you mean to tell me that you would prefer to have an owl to talk to than me?

PICKLE. Why should I want to talk to *you*? You are probably not a very intelligent girl. You are not even pretty. You are excessively in the way. That is sufficiently plain speaking, I hope.

MAD. (*gasping*). Not even pretty! Why, no one has spoken to me for the last million years without falling in love with me. Peter and Peregrine tell me how wonderful I am the whole day long, and even Mrs. Beeton, a person of very blunt perceptions, says that I am quite good-looking. Whatever can you mean?

PICKLE. What I say. But never mind, it's not your fault. Let me show you some of the pretty things I've got to sell.

[*He beckons her towards him. She approaches as though against her will.*

But perhaps you would rather *not* see them.

MAD. Yes—no—show them to me.

PICKLE. What do you think of these? They are precious stones drawn from the deepest, darkest depths of the sea.

MAD. Oh! how they glisten! Like noonlight seen through leaves.

PICKLE. That is the magic in them. They are so magical that I have to guard them very carefully. It wouldn't do to turn so much magic loose in the world.

MAD. (*touching the tray*). And what is this?

PICKLE. That is a comb I stole from a mermaid's hair when she lay asleep in the rocks one sunny afternoon. If I had been discovered——

MAD. Yes——

PICKLE. They would have turned me into a porpoise.

MAD. Who would?

PICKLE. Don't ask so many questions. This lamp was in the chamber of the Sleeping Beauty. Nothing can put it out. It will still be burning when we are dead and gone.

MAD. What is "dead and gone"?

PICKLE. Even you will know some day. Here are many beautiful things, but they are not for sale. I shall give them to the Princess when I find her.

MAD. The Princess! Who is she?

PICKLE. I do not know. That is the difficulty. She will be my last adventure. When I find her, I shall know that there *is* nothing more to find. So I am in no hurry.

MAD. I wonder if I have seen her!

PICKLE. That is quite possible. There is a reflection of her on you, like the wind's shadow on long grass. Whoever has seen her carries something of her which is like a reflection. So it may well be.

MAD. You seem to be speaking from a long way off.

PICKLE. That is because my thoughts are wandering, though my body is here. My thoughts wander by themselves, and later my body follows them. I suppose they are seeking for the Princess.

MAD. (*shivering*). I feel a little cold, as though a sea-wind had passed over me.

PICKLE. Just now they are wandering through a deserted city which is built on the sea-shore—a very lonely place.

MAD. I want to cry. Tell me something happy.

PICKLE. About a garden full of pomegranates where a Princess sits all day. All the kings in the world love her, but she laughs at them all.

MAD. That is like me. Have you loved her?

PICKLE. For a few moments. She gave me this pomegranate. Whoever tastes it is happy for ever. I have not tasted it yet.

MAD. Oh! give it to me!

PICKLE. Why should I give it to you?

MAD. That I may be happy for ever.

PICKLE. You have never been unhappy.

MAD. Just now I felt a chill blow across me like a cold sea-wind. I do not wish to feel it again.

PICKLE. If you are unhappy, you will become very beautiful and I shall love you.

MAD. May I take your hand?

PICKLE. Why?

MAD. Because I want to get quite close to you and shut my eyes and follow your thoughts wherever they go.

PICKLE. If you do, you will be unhappy. You do not know what my thoughts are. Witch-girls have no thoughts.

MAD. (*shyly*). Perhaps I may call some of them back to me like birds, to settle on me as birds do in the trees at sunset.

PICKLE. Why do you want that?

MAD. I want you for my friend. At the same time (*with a sudden return to her old manner*) you have treated me very badly. Still, if you can show me someone more beautiful than I am, you will be justified and I will forgive you. In fact, I have *really* forgiven you already.

PICKLE. What a vain, spoilt little Witch-girl! Still, come with me and we'll see.

MAD. (*excitedly*). Yes! Let us start at once.

PICKLE. Where to, though?

MAD. Anywhere, of course.

PICKLE. But why, after all, are you so anxious to go anywhere?

MAD. Because I am angry——

PICKLE. Oh! you're angry, are you?

MAD. (*with dignity*). With Peter and Peregrine and Mr. Beeton. But with Mrs. Beeton I am furious. (*Viciously*) I should like to turn her into a toad.

PICKLE. Silly little Witch-girl! What does it all matter? What silly things you worry your head about!

MAD. But Mrs. Beeton *was* very rude to me, and I am tired of the others.

PICKLE. It must be nice to be so young! A hundred

Mrs. Beetons might be rude to me every day and I should not care. Witch-girls are born with the gift of never growing old—are they not? So in another thousand years you will still be the same. I wonder if that is a good thing.

MAD. Why should it not be a good thing?

PICKLE. It makes it rather difficult to know what to talk about. Still, it's a change. Most women are so grown-up that even I feel like a child beside them.

MAD. Most women are silly creatures. I'm glad I'm not a real one. Only on the outside.

PICKLE. If you fell in love with me, you would become one for a little, but it wouldn't last. That is the annoying part. I am not quite sure that it's worth while.

MAD. That what's worth while?

PICKLE. Bothering about you at all. It's like trying to impress one's likeness on water, and yet it would be so good for you. After having taken everything your own way for so many thousand years and annoying other people, you ought to suffer a little yourself.

MAD. (*stamping her foot*). You are very rude, and you say things that I don't understand. I don't think I shall come with you, after all.

PICKLE. And I really don't mind very much whether you do or not.

MAD. In that case I shall certainly come, if only to annoy you.

PICKLE. You won't even do that. Silly little Witch-girl! You have so much to learn. Yes, come with me, for with those eyes and hair you will make a dear companion, and at least you won't pretend to be clever.

MAD. You have a great deal to learn, too. You have grown dull-witted from living so much with human beings, I can assure you. I am not silly in the least.

PICKLE. Perhaps you are not, but it pleases me to think so. I am so tired of wise women.

MAD. You talk such a lot. Why don't we start ?
PICKLE. We might as well. Why not ?
MAD. At once—at once.

Song

PICKLE and MAD.

It's a long way, a far way, a hard way to the sea,
But there's a ship in harbour, and it's on her I would be,
Straining at her moorings, straining out to sea,
With the captain on the deck a-spying out for me.

Oh ! you take the sea-way and I'll take the road,
And I'll meet you at the harbours and watch the ship unload.
You upon the sea-way, I upon the road,
If the sea is your fancy, the land is my abode : . . .
We're two jolly wanderers and we've no fixed abode.

[*They dance away.*

SCENE III

A quaint street in an irregularly built city, with curious houses of all colours. The inhabitants are LITTLE PEOPLE, *fantastically dressed, who every now and again flit furtively about the streets, darting here and there. A whole crowd of them enter silently and do a peculiar, silent dance, after which they suddenly vanish.*

[*The* PEDLAR *and* MADRIALA *dance on as soon as the* LITTLE PEOPLE *have gone.*

PICKLE. We have now been together for four days, and I think you the loveliest person in the world.

MAD. Adorable Pickle! You do not know how much I love you!

PICKLE. I have travelled farther than anyone else, but that is the first really good news I have ever heard.

MAD. And the Princess? Am I truly as beautiful as she?

PICKLE. It is not only the shadow of the Princess which is on you, as I thought at first. You have her eyes, her hair, her hands. No one else has——

MAD. I don't care now whether I *am* beautiful or not, except when you look at me. When you stop looking at me, I think I shall turn into an old withered tree. I hope so, at least.

PICKLE. What a change from the vain little Witch of four days ago!

MAD. Yes. What has happened to me?

PICKLE. I should have to use all my magic to find out.

MAD. Your eyes are so clear—you must be able to see my heart dancing.

PICKLE. But have you really a *heart*? *That* is the difficulty.

MAD. Of course I have one.

PICKLE. How do you know?

MAD. Because I love you.

PICKLE. But it is not necessary to have a heart to love. I can love without one. I found mine too heavy. With it I could only walk very slowly. I like going quickly, so one day I tied a stone round it and dropped it into a deep pool. I have been happy ever since.

MAD. I wish I could find that pool.

PICKLE. Why—what would you do?

MAD. I would whistle for a fish, and when he came I would tell him to bring it up to me in his mouth. Then I would nurse it, oh! so gently, until it grew soft again —for it must have grown very hard and cold down

there in the water. Then when you were asleep, I would put it back again into your breast.

PICKLE. Then I should be very angry with you.

MAD. Why angry?

PICKLE. It would be cruel. You do not know what a nuisance a heart can be. Besides, Witch-girls are not *meant* to have hearts. It spoils everything.

MAD. But it's your fault! You shouldn't have called me to you in the wood that day!

PICKLE. My Delight! How glad I am that you came! Nothing had happened to me for such a long time.

MAD. If my heart grows very tiresome, I'll find that pool and drop it in too.

PICKLE. If you are wise, you will.

MAD. But not for a long time. It would be very wasteful to throw my heart away just when I had found it.

PICKLE. You will soon think differently.

MAD. Never, I'm sure. It is great fun having a heart. I suppose Peter and Peregrine have had one all the time. That is why they are so fond of me. But how mean of them, not to have taught me how to get hold of one! I shall scold them when I see them again. Mr. Beeton must have a funny little soft one like an artichoke, and Mrs. Beeton one like a crab-apple.

PICKLE. Well, we'll make the most of your new toy—until it breaks.

MAD. Mine is like a bird with fiery feathers, and if you touch it, it will burn you.

PICKLE. Then I had better keep away from it.

MAD. Yes, you had better keep away from it, for it is a very greedy heart and will eat you up.

PICKLE. I shall take care, I shall only warm my hands at it when I am cold.

MAD. What about me? Where shall I warm my hands?

PICKLE. My kisses will warm them.

MAD. Sometimes your kisses seem cold.

PICKLE. My lips are cold ; it is not my fault.

MAD. I wish you too had a fiery heart.

PICKLE. It is too late to wish that.

MAD. Then when I am cold, must I freeze to death?

PICKLE (*a little impatiently*). Why will you talk about such serious things!

[*A pause.*

Do you know where we are?

MAD. No. It is a nice, queer place. What is it?

PICKLE. It is the City of the Little People.

MAD. Are they related to my dear goblins?

PICKLE. Only very distantly. Many strange creatures pass this way—Witches (the dark kind who ride on broomsticks), sirens, were-wolves, Banshees, Vampires. But the Little People are its true inhabitants.

MAD. Are they friendly?

PICKLE. They are neither friendly nor hostile. They will gather round you thick and soft as snow-flakes. But they are quite harmless. They do their work and care for no one.

MAD. What is their work?

PICKLE. They are the warmth of fire, the scent of flowers, the sweetness of honey.

MAD. (*clapping her hands*). Oh! how delightful! Some day I must bring the others here.

PICKLE (*frowning*). The others—what others?

MAD. Why, my dearest Peregrine and my darling Peter. How they will love it!

PICKLE (*annoyed*). Are you still thinking of them?

MAD. (*surprised*). But why *shouldn't* I think of them? Of course I am.

PICKLE (*jealously*). I refuse to share your heart with those clumsy idiots.

MAD. (*indignantly*). They are not idiots—even if they are sometimes a little clumsy. I think it very mean of you to grudge them a teeny-tiny corner of my thoughts when the *whole* of my heart belongs to you.

PICKLE. You care for them much more than you do for me. They are never out of your mind.

MAD. How can you be so horrid, selfish, wicked and unkind!

PICKLE. Very well, if that is all you have to say to me, we had certainly better part.

[*He turns as though to go.* MADRIALA, *panic-stricken, throws her arms round his neck.*

MAD. Oh! what are you saying? When every tiny atom of me is yours. I can't do without you for five minutes. I can't. Oh! oh! oh! I'll never think of anybody else again. But I *must* have you!—I must have you! For ever, for ever, for ever!

PICKLE (*a little mollified*). Very well, we will say no more about it.

MAD. Oh! my darling, beautiful, only Pickle! Are we happy again?

PICKLE. Happy enough to go on with, at any rate.

MAD. And will you love me for ever and ever?—

PICKLE (*fervently*). For ever and ever and——

[*As he speaks a* BEAUTIFUL GIRL *appears at the back of the stage and looks at the* PEDLAR. *His eyes meet hers and he trembles all over. She moves away.*

MAD. What is the matter, dear heart? Are you cold?

PICKLE. I am very cold, and yet I burn.

[*He looks after the girl.*

MAD. The cold has got into your voice.
PICKLE. I think it has.
MAD. Then let us not stay here any longer. Let us go to a warm fire.
PICKLE (*indifferently*). As you will.

[*They go out.*

BEAUTIFUL GIRL. Men on land and men at sea,
Follow—follow—follow me! . . .
Come—come—come—come. . . .
My hands are cold, my heart is numb,
But you must follow
By hill and hollow,
You must follow, aching and dumb,
Wherever I lead,
Though your feet shall bleed,
And I run as fast as a flying steed! . . .
There is no escape,
Though I change my shape,
To basilisk, butterfly or ape.
Come you must,
Without drink or crust,
Follow me till you sink to dust.

[*The crowd of silent* LITTLE PEOPLE *enter and slowly dance. They silently go out.* PICKLE *and* MADRIALA *and the* BEAUTIFUL GIRL *re-enter. The* BEAUTIFUL GIRL *beckons to* PICKLE, *who tremblingly goes towards her.*

THE B. G. Come with me—you are mine!

MAD. No, no—he is mine, all mine! Mine—mine! Oh! dear heart, come back, come back!

[*The* PEDLAR *and the* BEAUTIFUL GIRL *disappear.*

[MADRIALA *rushes after them but a crowd of* LITTLE PEOPLE *enter and prevent her going. She turns only to find herself stopped by others. Still more appear and noiselessly dance round her.* MADRIALA *falls senseless.*

ACT III

ACT III

Scene I

The exterior of the cottage at nightfall with the moon rising, but the scene is entirely changed. The garden has become a mere tangle; the green fence is now partly broken. The path leading to the door is green with groundsel, and the door itself has almost disappeared under a tangle of vine.

[Mrs. Beeton, *quite aged, comes on slowly shading her eyes with her hands.*

[Beeton *also very aged, with bent back, enters.*

Mrs. B. Have you seen the gentlemen?

Mr. B. (*in a voice tremulous with age*). No.

Mrs. B. I suppose they're away looking for her, searching the hills and woods. A-calling and hollering after her fit to break their hearts, as they've done every day since she left us, near on seven years ago. But what's the use? She won't come back—never no more.

Mr. B. (*softly*). Maybe she will.

Mrs. B. (*sharply*). What's the use of talking so silly? (*She catches herself up.*) But there! it was my sharp tongue as drove her away. It shan't get the better of me again.

Mr. B. It weren't your sharp tongue as drove her away, Eliza, as much as the wandering in her feet.

Mrs. B. And what may you mean by that? Still,

it's a queer thing, she seems to 'a taken all joy and comfort along with her. Yet we was happy enough afore she came.

[*Shaking her head, she totters R.*

MR. B. There ain't no explaining these things, Eliza.

MRS. B. No—there ain't no explaining these things, nor why we be given tongues as be crueller nor swords.

Mr. B. I oughta done more. If I'd come to her reasonable like and told her as you never meant no more harm than the east wind when it nips the buds and kills the caterpillars, and led her mind to other things, as it were, I dessay she'd have stayed. It never took much to put things right again with Miss Madriala.

MRS. B. What I'm feared of, Bill, is as how them two poor gentlemen won't live much longer. They pine and pine, they do, like lost kittens. Quite helpless they are, and know no more of the world than new-born babes. Pity they don't marry; but no girl would look at 'em now, they're got so shrivelled-like. Only a district visitor would put up with 'em!

MR. B. You don't understand, Eliza. No one who's ever been sweet on Miss Madriala could think of anyone else.

MRS. B. Where's your sense, Bill? Not think of anyone else! Why shouldn't they? Look at me? Young men besides yourself were after me when I was a girl, and now they've settled down with families of twelve an' sixteen. I wish these two gents would do the same.

MR. B. No use, Eliza—no use at all. But I can't put it clearer.

MRS. B. Well, men are poor, daft, headless things, as I've allus said.

MR. B. Quite right, Eliza, so we be.

[*He totters out.*

[PEREGRINE *and* PETER, *now two old men, enter together. Their hair is white, their*

bodies shrunken and bent. PETER *wears an enormous pair of horn spectacles. They hobble to the bench near the cottage door and sit.* BEETON *and* MRS. BEETON *look at them sorrowfully and inquiringly.*

P. and P. (*together*). No sign of her.

[BEETON *and* MRS. BEETON *shake their heads, sigh and go out.*

[PEREGRINE *and* PETER *sit, their heads drooping on their breasts. They half drop off to sleep.*

[MADRIALA *comes slowly down the stage, looking round with a half-bewildered expression. Her dress is in rags, her shoes quite worn out, her hair white and thin, her face covered with wrinkles. She sees the two old men sitting on the bench, and, suddenly rushing forward, she throws an arm round the neck of each. They wake up startled, but do not recognise her.*

MAD. Why, don't you know me? Madriala.

[*She takes an arm of each, looking from one to the other. They are dazed and bewildered.*

P. and P. (*weakly*). Madriala!

MAD. (*half laughing, half crying, shaking them*). You silly, silly creatures! you are still half asleep. *Do* wake up. But what has changed you so? Have I been away so long?

[P. *and* P. *look at her, bewildered, without replying.*

MAD. Why do you not speak to me? Are you angry because I went away?

PETER (*with an effort*). Yes, Madriala, you have been away for a very long time.

MAD. But not long enough to make you so old. To me it seems just a few days. Are you *sure* it is so long?

P. and P. (*sadly*). Yes, Madriala, quite, quite sure.

MAD. I will tell you what happened. When I was so cross that morning, I ran away into the fir woods, and there I found the Pedlar, and we walked and walked till we came to the town of Little People. Then . . . then . . .

[*She stops, bewildered, and draws her hand across her eyes.*

P. and P. (*softly*). Yes—Madriala?

MAD. (*pettishly*). I tell you I can't remember. The Little People came round me like a cloud. I must have fallen asleep. I know I had a sad, sad, sad dream.

[PETER *and* PEREGRINE *nod their heads slowly.*

MAD. I dreamed I was a human being with something here (*she touches her breast*) which ached and ached. I had no idea being human was so very horrid. And I was tired and lonely and hungry and unhappy. In my dream, of course, for I am beginning to forget what these words mean.

P. and P. You, Madriala—hungry and unhappy! Oh! oh!

MAD. (*impatiently*). But I tell you it was only a dream. (*Puzzled*) At least, it seems so now. It *must* have been a dream, mustn't it? Those sort of things don't happen to people *really*. Then suddenly everything became happy again.

P. and P. (*eagerly*). Yes—yes——

MAD. The air was full of scent like apple-blossoms. I seemed to start out of a dark cellar into sunshine.

And then I saw my dream standing in front of me all shimmering with great gauzy wings. I was still asleep of course.

P. and P. Yes.

MAD. *Really*, truly asleep *then*; I am not *quite* sure about before. But in my sleep I followed her, up and down, over fields and streams, through woods, until at last I came home and found you all. Then I *did* wake.

P. and P. *Where* did you wake, Madriala?

MAD. (*hurriedly*). Oh! in a horrid place. I can't bear to think of it. Don't ask me. It was cold and grey and dusty and stuffy and draughty. Like a prison.

PER. And then?

MAD. I started to find you. I could remember quite clearly the way the dream had led me in my sleep. I felt so gay and light-hearted. The aching had quite ceased. The path seemed to roll out in front of me like a ball of silk. So I followed it. So I came here.

PETER. Oh! Madriala, why did you ever leave us?

MAD. (*piteously*). I don't know. It was very foolish of me. Oh dear! I am so tired.

PER. Tired, Madriala—you! Oh dear!

MAD. Bad dreams make one tired, but (*with a sudden change to her old manner*) what have you two sweet creatures been doing?

PETER. Waiting for you, Madriala.

PER. There was nothing else to do.

MAD. (*frowning*). What nonsense! That is only an excuse. You say I have been away for a long time, so you ought to have painted lots and *lots*.

[PETER *shakes his head.*

And you, Peregrine, should have written millions of verses.

[PEREGRINE *spreads out his hands deprecatingly.*

MAD. (*impatiently*). But you must have done *something*.

PETER (*embarrassed*). Well—er—yes—well——

MAD. (*severely*). *Show* them to me.

PER. (*encouragingly*). They are not really so very bad, after all.

[PETER *opens a shabby portfolio which is lying in the porch of the cottage and takes out one or two very feeble water-colours.*

MAD. (*sternly and reproachfully*). Do you mean to say that you have come to *this*?

PETER (*weakly*). They have been exhibited. The Lord Mayor bought one.

MAD. Oh! Peter!

PETER (*defending himself*). But Peregrine is just as bad.

PER. Yes—er—well, you see,—there *was* nothing else to be done.

MAD. (*severely to* PEREGRINE). What have *you* been doing, Peregrine?

PER. They were very *short* poems. I wrote them for the local *Argus*. They—they—*pay* quite well.

MAD. You ought both to be thoroughly ashamed of yourselves. It certainly *was* time I was back.

[*There is silence.* PETER *and* PEREGRINE *do not know what to say.*

MAD. But that is all over now. We start afresh to-morrow.

P. and P. (*together with forced cheerfulness*). Yes—yes, we will certainly start afresh to-morrow.

[*They try to laugh to hide that their hearts are breaking.*

MAD. But where is Mr. Beeton?

P. and P. Still here. How glad he will be!

MAD. Does Mrs. Beeton still scold him?
PER. No; she has grown very gentle.
MAD. And the goblins?
P. and P. They have not been here for a long time.
MAD. (*yawning*). Well, I will see them all to-morrow. But now I am tired, so tired. I will go to bed.

Song

It's a far cry Nowhere;
The roads are rough and steep;
I've walked my feet out of my shoes
And now I fain would sleep.

It's a far cry homeward;
The roads are hard and long;
But grief of heart and pine, my dears,
Have ended in a song.

It's a far cry Nowhere;
I'll not go seek again;
It's a far cry homeward,
And it's there I will remain.

I'll not go seeking on the roads
For all the gold of Spain.

[*As* MADRIALA *sings,* PETER *and* PEREGRINE *creep quietly into the cottage. At the end of her song she follows them. The pond at the back lights up as the moon rises. The* GOBLINS *enter and do a light, ghostly dance.*

Scene II

MADRIALA'S *bedroom, very dainty and white.* PETER *and* PEREGRINE *open the door and enter very softly.* PEREGRINE *goes quickly to the mirror which hangs on the wall and, taking it, puts it quickly in the cupboard.*

[MADRIALA *enters.*

MAD. Oh! how sweet it is to be in my own dear room once more!

[*She looks sweetly at* PETER *and* PEREGRINE.

[P. *and* P. *smile at her.*

MAD. And now good night, my dears.

[*She kisses them both and they go out shyly.*

[MADRIALA *looks round for a second, takes off her things and, getting into bed, falls asleep.*

[*The* GOBLINS *are heard chanting in unison the air and words of a lullaby.*

Goblin Lullaby

Mince and mumble, scoot and scatter,
Softly, softly tread;
Weary, weary Madriala's
Safe tucked up in bed.
Sleep, sleep, soundly sleep,
Softly sleep, goblin sleep;
Never mind, it doesn't matter,
Cuddle safe in bed.

Goblins, all so gay and flighty,
Sing a drowsy tune;

She has come back, come back, come back,
Back and none too soon.
Soft as cream
Be your dream,
Rest, rest, rest, rest.
Nothing matters, sleep is best.
Madriala, sleepy head,
Sleep sound. We dance round your bed.

[*Moonlight streams into the room. A goblin appears at the window, then others. They come in one by one and stand in groups with their eyes all centred on* MADRIALA. *Presently one of them dips a handkerchief like a large poppy petal into an enormous bottle, which a very small goblin carries, wipes the wrinkles off her face and places a few drops between her lips. She changes instantly from Age to Youth and lies there young again, the moonbeams streaming in upon her, the grey hair and wrinkles gone.*

THE CHIEF GOBLIN. We will now go and restore Peter, Peregrine, and Mr. and Mrs. Beeton. Hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry, scamper along, scamper along, scamper along. It is our duty and our wish.

[*They go out quickly and silently, with many fantastic somersaults and grimaces.*

Scene III

The exterior of the cottage completely transformed. Almond, cherry and other early fruit blossom everywhere. Light, bright music.

[Beeton *is discovered, fairly young, whistling as he moves among the flowers.* Mrs. Beeton *enters from the cottage, years younger, smiling and happy.*

Mrs. B. Come along, Bill, my dear, and help me to get breakfast.

Mr. B. Oh! Eliza, what a change since she come back! Lor' lumme! What a change!

Mrs. B. It's scarce to be believed! You look a good twenty years younger—that you do, Bill—and that handsome!

Mr. B. And you're just blooming, Eliza, like one o' them there peonies. I must kiss you, Eliza, just to show how glad I am.

Mrs. B. It must be thirty years since you kissed me last. You'll have forgotten how to!

Mr. B. Well, you'll learn me again.

[*He gives her a smacking kiss.*

Mrs. B. Well, there—it's an ill wind, as the proverb says. But I can't believe it. I can't believe it at all. I came down sad as a moultin' hen this morning, and there, lawk-a-mussy! was Madriala, pretty as paint, smilin' at me as I opened the kitchen door.

Mr. B. I ain't been so pleased since our wedding-day, and *that* wasn't quite the same, seein' as then I was a bit scared-like.

Mrs. B. I couldn't say nothin', I couldn't. But Madriala she come forward an' kissed me. An' then I just cried an' cried, but I couldn't speak.

MR. B. Tears is a wonderful sign of joy, Eliza!

MRS. B. "Oh, Madriala!" I sez at last. "Where have you been?" "I really don't know, Mrs. Beeton," she sez, "but I'm back again."

MR. B. It don't do to ask no questions—getting back is all that matters.

MRS. B. "Oh! Madriala," I sez, "'ave you see the gentlemen? The gentlemen have been a-breakin' their hearts over you an' 'ave got old as Methuselahs"; but just as I said these words——

MR. B. Yuss, Eliza—yuss——

MRS. B. Who should come into the kitchen but Mr. Peter and Mr. Peregrine, lookin'—lookin'—well, younger than they've either of them ever looked in their lives.

MR. B. It's a fair miracle—that's what it is.

MRS. B. An' when they saw Miss Madriala—well, it was like blind men suddenly seein' the sun again. Their mouths an' their eyes just fell open like that (*she imitates them*), and then they burst into tears too, for they was even happier than me.

MR. B. Very right and proper, Eliza.

MRS. B. So Madriala has to throw her arms round their necks too. Such a kissin' and a cryin' an' laughin' altogether. Lazarus restored from the dead ain't in it.

MR. B. We're all raised from the dead, Eliza, that's what it is.

MRS. B. I'll never feel so pleased again—no, not when I get to 'Eaven. Well, well, breakfast must be cooked, I s'pose, even if I *do* feel light-'earted!

[MR. *and* MRS. BEETON *go into the cottage.*

[*Enter* MADRIALA, PETER *and* PEREGRINE, their *arms full of flowers. They are all transformed, youthful, smiling and happy. They dance together down the stage.*

MAD. Oh dear! how happy I am! I've never been so happy since before the world was made.

PETER. And it's only the beginning!

PER. We'll go on and on.

MAD. We'll be so happy that the world will overflow with it. . . . .

PETER. With our happiness. . . . .

PER. With our songs. . . . .

MAD. Like a river. And all the dark, grubby things will be washed away. . . . .

PETER. And no one will ever be cross or greedy, because they won't have time.

MAD. Isn't it queer?—I've forgotten everything that happened since I left you. Even the bad dream.

PETER. Oh! how beautiful you are, Madriala!

MAD. To-day my name is Jacynth or Rosalys. It's a sort of birthday, you know.

PETER. Then, Jacynth, to-day I will paint you as no one painted anyone before.

PER. And, Rosalys, I feel poems about you shaking themselves out of my brain like falling stars!

MAD. This shall be the longest, happiest day ever known.

PETER. If I get any happier I shall burst.

PER. And I.

MAD. Then you had better sing.

Song

PETER. Red, red, red and burning are the roses,
Red in the shadow, crimson in the sun;
Crimson are the shadows, stained through with roses.
Laugh like the roses, Youth is never done.

PER. Youth is never done; through the meadows lightly
Go the winds, the light winds, sunny winds and free.
Sing will I to-day, sing will I for ever,
Till the winds cease singing, which shall never be.

MAD. Dance, dance, dance! The meadows all are dancing,
Dance! The waves are dancing, light waved, curved and white.
Waves, shadows, roses—dancing all together;
Dance sun with shadow—morning dance with night.

PETER. Happy, happy day—
PER. Speed on and cease not ever—
MAD. Ours it is for ever—
PETER. Day for ever sweet.
PER. I have learnt a new song—
PETER. Song which lasts for ever—
MAD. All the joy of all the earth is in my feet!

[*Dance for all three.*

[*At the end of the song,* MRS. BEETON *and* BEETON *appear and call out "Breakfast," and beat a gong at the same time. They join in the dance and form a chain, dancing into the cottage as the curtain falls*

THE END

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